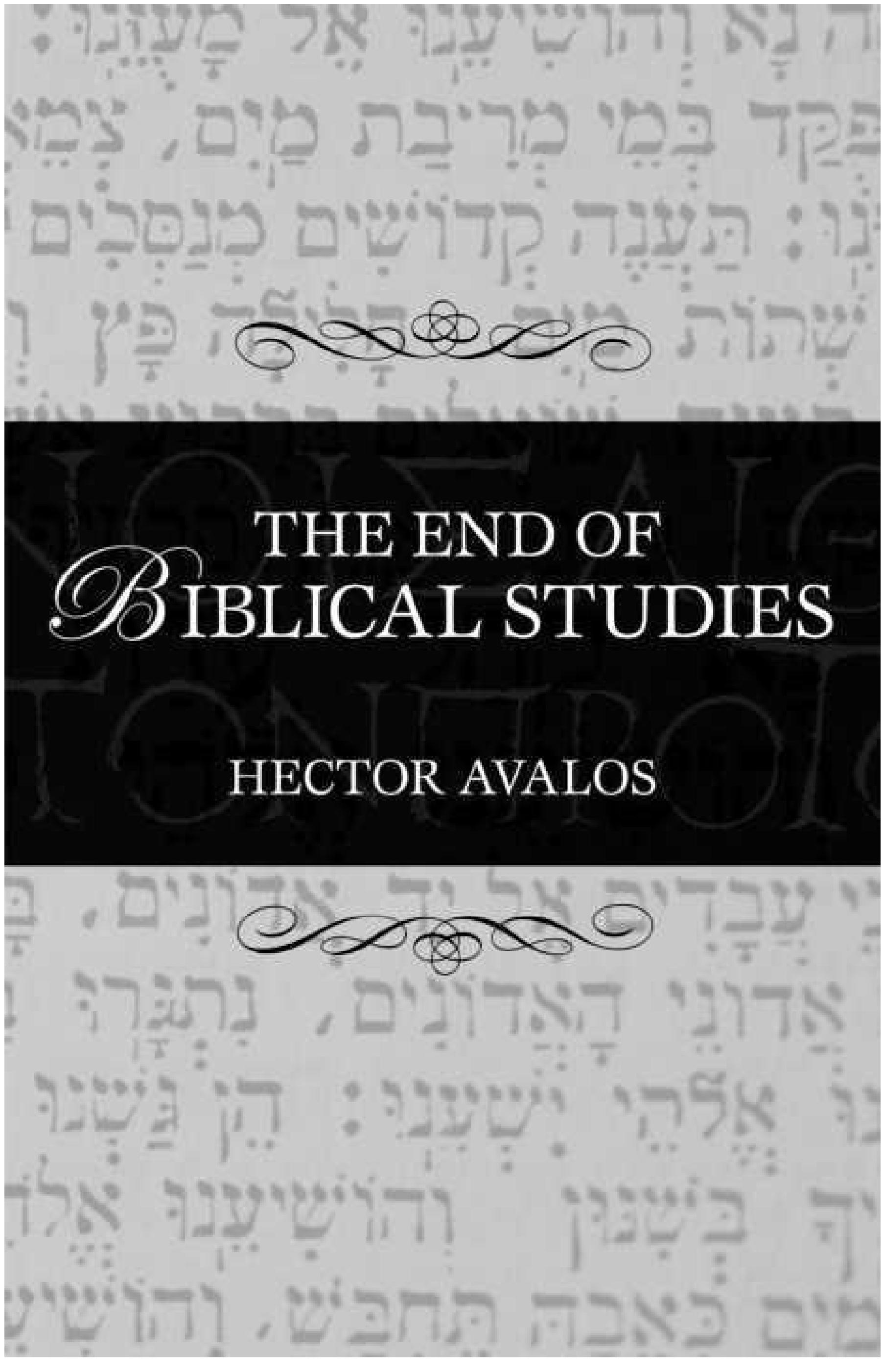
THE END OF BIBLICAL STUDIES

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CONTENTS

Abbreviations

AAR American Academy of Religion

ABD *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, D. N. Freedman, ed.

AIA Archaeological Institute of America

AJA *American Journal of Archaeology*

ASOR American Schools of Oriental Research

BAR *Biblical Archaeology Review*

BAS Biblical Archaeology Society

BASOR *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*

BHS *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*

BR *Bible Review*

BS *Bibliotheca Sacra*

CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*

CEV Contemporary English Version

DSS Dead Sea Scrolls

DTRH The Deuteronomistic History

GNB Good News Bible

HSM *Harvard Semitic Monographs*

HTR *Harvard Theological Review*

IDB *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, G. A. Buttrick et al.

IEJ *Israel Exploration Journal*

JAAR *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*

JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSUP	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series*
KJV	King James Version
KTU	*Die Keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*, G. A. Buttrick et al.
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible
NEA	*Near Eastern Archaeology*
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OEANE	*Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, E. Meyers, ed.
OT	Old Testament
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association*
REB	Revised English Bible

RSN	*Religious Studies News*
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
TNIV	Today's New International Version
UBS	United Bible Societies
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der deutschen morgendländischen Gesellschaft*
ZDVP	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Pälastina-Vereins*

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66rooks, much like films, are productions involving a large cast of characters and behind-the-scenes personnel. This production would not have been possible without the help of my wife, Cynthia Avalos, who, as executive producer, kept my life in order so that I could write the bulk of this book in one intense summer in 2006. She helped proofread the manuscript, and she provided a sympathetic ear for all the usual vexations authors have.

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As usual, I must thank Rusty, our omniscient squirrel, and his friend, Skippy, who provided endless entertainment when writer's fatigue subjugated me.

I hereby absolve them all for my transgressions.

NOTES TO THE READERS

ur discussions of the Bible translations and textual variations necessitate the use of various versions, as no one version illustrates our arguments. But unless noted otherwise, all of our biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version, as presented in Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger, The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). For the Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew text, we depend on the following:

GREEK: Kurt Aland *et al.* The Greek New Testament, 4th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1998).

HEBREW: K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds. Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983).

We use foreign words in our main text as sparingly as possible, and only when deemed necessary for understanding our arguments. However, in cases where foreign language sources were available, we have included more complete foreign language extracts in the footnotes for the benefit of scholars.

INTRODUCTION

t_Zbe only mission of biblical studies should be to end biblical studies as we know it. This book will explain why I have come to such a conclusion. In the process, it will review the history of academic biblical studies as primarily a religionist apologetic enterprise, despite its partial integration of secularist epistemologies. The majority of biblical scholars in academia are primarily concerned with maintaining the value of the Bible despite the fact that the important questions about its origin have either been answered or cannot be answered. More importantly, we will show how academia, despite claims to independence, is still part of an ecclesial-academic complex that collaborates with a competitive media industry.

Most standard histories will grant that biblical studies began as an apologetic enterprise.' Few biblical scholars will admit that it is still just that. The largest organization of professional biblical scholars, the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), began as the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis in New York City in 1880, and its chief members included Philip Schaff, Charles A. Briggs, and Francis Brown. Some of these men represented the more liberal streams of scholarship. A few were friendly toward the then emerging "higher criticism," which dared to question the authorship and historicity of many biblical events.' Yet all were religious in some way. They all believed the Bible was worth keeping in the modern world.

Today, the Society of Biblical Literature is larger and more pluralistic in representation. One will find Jews represented, whereas there were none at the first meeting of the SBL. Secular humanists, such as myself, have participated in reading many papers. Although still heavily dominated by men, the SBL has more women members than even twenty years ago. The SBL is no longer centered in the northeast, and its members come to its massive annual meetings, usually in the United States, from countries all over the globe.

But important features have remained constant. The main bond is bibliolatry, which entails the conviction that the Bible is valuable and should remain the subject of academic study. Equally important, the Society of Biblical Literature, while now relatively more free of denominationalist agendas, is still

religionist in orientation. Scholars still are either part of faith communities, or see their work as assisting faith communities directly or indirectly. One of the most prominent Jewish biblical scholars today, Jon D. Levenson, comments: "[T]he motivations of most historical critics of the Hebrew Bible continues to be religious in character. It is a rare scholar in the field whose past does not include an intense Christian or Jewish commitment."3 Atheists may read papers at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, but usually only when such papers do not challenge the relevance of biblical studies itself.

BRIEF STATEMENT OF OUR THESIS

For our purposes, we can summarize our plea to end biblical studies as we know it with two main premises:

1. Modern biblical scholarship has demonstrated that the Bible is the product of cultures whose values and beliefs about the origin, nature, and purpose of our world are no longer held to be relevant, even by most Christians and Jews.

2. Paradoxically, despite the recognition of such irrelevance, the profession of academic biblical studies still centers on maintaining the illusion of relevance by:

   A. A variety of scholarly disciplines whose methods and conclusions are often philosophically flawed (e.g., translation, textual criticism, archaeology, history, and biblical theology).

   B. An infrastructure that supports biblical studies (e.g., universities, a media-publishing complex, churches, and professional organizations).

The first premise acknowledges that we have indeed discovered much new information about the Bible. The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) and the enor mous archaeological treasures found in the ancient Near East in the last one hundred fifty years or so have set the Bible more firmly in its original cultural context. However, it is those very discoveries that show that the Bible is irrelevant, insofar as it is part of a world radically dissimilar to ours in its conception of the cosmos, the supernatural, and the human sense of morality. In fact, in a 1975 report published by the American Academy

of Religion, one scholar frankly admitted that "[i]ndeed, one of the enduring contributions of biblical studies in this century has been the discovery of the strangeness of the thought-forms of the biblical literature of the `western' tradition to us."4 In short, scholars of religion themselves, not just secular humanists, admit that the Bible is a product of an ancient and very different culture.

IRRELEVANCE DEFINED

"Irrelevant" here refers to a biblical concept or practice that is no longer viewed as valuable, applicable, and/or ethical. Thus, whereas most Americans today regard genocide as contemptible, that was not the case in many biblical texts. In fact, Michael Coogan, a widely respected biblical scholar, admits that some biblical practices are so objectionable today that churches try to hide parts of the Bible from their members. As Coogan phrases it,

> Conspicuously absent from lectionaries are most or all of such books as Joshua, with its violent extermination of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan at divine command, or Judges, with its horrifying narratives of patriarchy and sexual assault in chapters 11 and 19-to say nothing of the Song of Solomon, with its charged eroticism, or of Job, with its radical challenge to the dominant biblical view of a just and caring God.5

Likewise, our modern medical establishment has discarded the supernatural explanations for illness found in the Bible, rendering such explanations irrelevant. Here are some more examples of scientific and scholarly "discoveries" that provide further evidence of the Bible's irrelevance:

- Though modern science has demonstrated otherwise, some biblical authors held that the universe was created in only six days.

- Despite the weight that theologians place on the words and deeds of the great figures in the Bible (Abraham, Moses, and David), research indicates that these figures are not as "historical" as once thought.

- There is no independent evidence for the life or teachings of Jesus in the first century CE, which means that most modern Christians are not even following Jesus' teachings.

• Biblical authors generally believed that women were subordinate to men.

As we shall argue, even when many persons in the modern world still hold to biblical ideas (e.g., creationism), it is partly because academic biblical scholars are not sufficiently vocal about undermining outdated biblical beliefs. Instead, such scholars concentrate on maintaining the value of the biblical text in modern society.

IRRELEVANCE BY THE NUMBERS

The idea that the Bible is irrelevant, even among those who regard themselves as Christian, can be demonstrated empirically very easily. For decades, the Gallup organization has conducted surveys on biblical literacy. Such surveys have repeatedly demonstrated that despite professed adherence to the Bible, most Christians are either ignorant of the Bible or their appeal to the Bible is very limited. In fact, a 1942 survey showed that about 41 percent of Americans had not read from the Bible in the previous twelve months.'

In a detailed survey of American faith in the 1990s, Gallup polls found that "eight in ten Americans say they are Christians, but only four in ten know that Jesus, according to the Bible, delivered the Sermon on the Mount."' That is not a great improvement over the 34 percent of respondents who knew that fact in 1954.[8] Thus, a majority of self-professed Christians did not know the basic facts of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), which outlines what most scholars consider a fundamental message of Christianity.[9] A 2005 Gallup poll showed that "[f]ewer than half of Americans can name the first book of the Bible."[10]

Despite apparent improvements in some aspects of biblical literacy, biblical literacy advocates judge recent strides to be inadequate. One such advocate is the Bible Literacy Project, which works closely with the Gallup organization. In a 2005 report, the Bible Literacy Project noted that while a majority of American teens have a rudimentary knowledge of the Bible, "substantial minorities lack even the most basic working knowledge of the Bible."" If we return to the benchmark question about the Sermon on the Mount, most teenagers surveyed "either responded that they did not know (27%) or incorrectly (36%) believed some other quotation presented to them was from the Sermon on the Mount.""

Leonard Greenspoon, a keen observer of the use of the Bible in the media,

argues that such surveys leave much to be desired: "I'm not convinced that any of this really tells us about the overall state of biblical (il)literacy ... much of this strikes me as just slightly above the level of biblical trivia."" However, the most recent comprehensive survey only confirms the dire state of biblical literacy. In September 2006, Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion published a comprehensive survey on American religion, which showed that 21.9 percent of mainline Protestants and 33.1 percent of Catholics "never" read Scripture.14 Michael Coogan's observation is pertinent here: "[A]lthough the Bible is acknowledged in theory as an authority, much of it has simply been ignored."15

Such dire statistics apply not only to average laypersons but to those who aspire to be scholars of religion as well. Ian Markham has drawn on statistical data to reevaluate the nature of biblical studies in England.10 In October of 1990, some sixty-five first-year students in theology at Exeter University and King's College in London replied to a questionnaire. In one of the questions, students were asked to place five biblical events in chronological order, the correct sequence being: flood, exodus, reign of King David, reign of King Solomon, and exile. Only 27 percent of these students could place all events in the correct sequence, and 20 percent failed altogether. In short, even those who are expected to have an interest in the Bible exhibited poor results."

Yet for Markham "both church and university need to find a modern, academic way to impart the elementary knowledge on which all theological reflection ultimately depends." 18 So whether in the United States or in Britain biblical studies is still viewed as an instrument for religious reflection rather than for helping students move beyond the use of the Bible as any sort of authority in theological or any other kind of reflection.19

More importantly, we repeatedly demonstrate that it is biblical scholars and educated ministers themselves who say that a lot of biblical materials are irrelevant. Such scholars are not all liberal. A case in point is an article written by Daniel J. Estes in Bibliotheca Sacra, a prestigious evangelical Christian journal.20 Estes, too, is worried about irrelevancy; he has even developed a "scale" to measure the relevance (his term is "degree of transfer") of biblical teachings. The scale is as follows:21

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Obsolete precepts		Patterns			Principles			Directives		

For Estes, "degree of transfer" and "continuity" refer to how obliged a modern audience is to follow what is addressed to an "original audience" in the Bible. Something close to the zero side would be considered obsolete whereas something at 10 would be considered a directive that Christians must still follow.

He then provides the example of the law of first fruits in Deuteronomy 26:1-11, which commands Israelites to go to a location chosen by Yahweh to provide the priest with the first yields of their agricultural season. Estes would rank this close to the zero side of the scale (obsolete precepts) because, among other things, most modern Christians no longer are farmers, nor do they recognize a central location that Yahweh has chosen.

Estes recognizes that "[n]one of these specific items has a precise equivalent in the identity and experience of Christian believers today.... Many of the Old Testament legal prescriptions are in this category, including, for example, the dietary regulations."22 When pressed to find examples of "total continuity" between the original biblical audience and today's Christian audience, he admits that "[i]ndisputable examples of total continuity between the two audiences are relatively rare."23

John Bright, regarded as one of the most outstanding American biblical scholars of the last century, reflected a similar sentiment regarding the sabbatical and jubilee years in Leviticus 25, when he remarked that "the regulations described therein are obviously so little applicable to the modern situation that a preacher might be pardoned if he told himself that the passage contains no relevant message for his people whatever."24 In fact, if we were to go verse by verse, I suspect that 99 percent of the Bible would not even be missed, as it reflects many practices, injunctions, and ideas not much more applicable than Leviticus 25.

THE PARADOX OF BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP

Our second major premise is that despite this admission of irrelevance the

profession of academic biblical scholarship paradoxically and self-servingly promotes the illusion of relevance. The maintenance of this illusion is intended to make believers think that they have "the Bible" when all they really have is a book constructed by modern elite scholars. So even if 99.9 percent of modem Christians said that the Bible was relevant to them, such relevance is based on their illusory assumption that modern versions do reflect the original "Bible" to some extent.25 Promoting the illusion of rele vance serves to justify the very existence of the profession of biblical scholarship, and not much more.

I, of course, cannot claim to be the first to raise the question of the relevance of biblical studies. In fact, we can find similar conclusions at least by the beginning of the twentieth century in the work of Friedrich Delitzsch, a professor at Berlin University. In the period from 1902 to 1904 he delivered three lectures that ignited the so-called Babel-Bible debate.26 In these lectures Delitzsch began to outline how the new discoveries in Mesopotamia were forcing biblical scholars to rethink the whole idea that the Bible, especially the Old Testament, was superior to any other ancient document.

In the early 1920s, Delitzsch took his ideas to their logical conclusion in The Great Deception (Die Grosse Tauschung), an inflammatory two-volume work that mounted a full-scale assault on the place of the Old Testament in modern life.27 He wrote that "insofar as religion is concerned, all these Old Testament books, from Genesis to Daniel, have absolutely no meaning for us today, and especially as Christians."28 In addition, he said that "the so-called `Old Testament' is completely disposable for the Christian Church and for the Christian community."29 Unfortunately, his anti-Judaism clouded some of the more legitimate questions he had raised about the reasons Western society continued to privilege this set of books.

In his 2005 essay titled "Do We Need Biblical Scholars?" Philip Davies, the British biblical scholar notorious for emphasizing the lack of historicity of many biblical accounts, asked the questions

> Can biblical scholars persuade others that they conduct a legitimate academic discipline? Until they do, can they convince anyone that they have something to offer to the intellectual life of the modern world? Indeed, I think many of us have to convince ourselves firstj3o

Despite his lack of religious belief pertaining to the Bible, Davies concluded that he would still advocate on behalf of the relevance of biblical scholarship in the modern world. Similarly, Jacques Berlinerblau, a secularist, believes that although biblical scholars have failed to see the dire implications of their own discoveries secularists must still seek to be biblically literate.31

And, of course, throughout Jewish and Christian history there has been discussion about the relevance of certain passages, books, or even large sections of the Bible. One need only remember the notorious proposal of Marcion, the Gnostic writer of the second century: he advocated for the ejection of the entire Old Testament from Christian life 32 Martin Luther relegated the book of James to a sort of subordinate status. Thomas Jefferson deleted all the material he deemed unnecessary and irrelevant in order to create the "Jefferson Bible."33 Nonetheless, each of these individuals thought that some parts of scripture were worth keeping.

Our argument is that there is really nothing in the entire book Christians call "the Bible" that is any more relevant than anything else written in the ancient world. Similar sentiments have been expressed in regard to religious studies as a whole. In 1997, Russell McCutcheon wrote Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia.34 He argued that the concept of religion as being sui generis-i.e., "self-generated," and not a phenomenon that can be reduced to psychology, sociology, or any other natural aspect of human experience-is fundamentally flawed, and serves to maintain the relevance of the profession of religious studies. By saying that religion is unique and self-generated one can argue for its continued existence and relevance.

Timothy Fitzgerald, another prominent scholar of religion, argues that "[a]t one level the so-called study of religion (also called the science of religion, religious studies, comparative religion and phenomenology of religion) is a disguised form of liberal ecumenical theology."35 He also observes that "even in the work of scholars who are explicitly non-theological, half disguised theological presuppositions persistently distort the analytical pitch."36 Although we ultimately disagree with Timothy Fitzgerald's notion that religion does not really exist, we agree that what passes for religious studies today is permeated by theological assumptions .17

The place of biblical and religious studies in academia is being questioned

even by Christian historians and theologians, though for reasons different from ours. One case in point is Darryl G. Hart, a Christian historian who argues that religion has actually suffered when integrated into academic study. As he phrases it, "religion does better without the blessing of the university."38 Hart concludes: "It may be time for faithful academics to stop trying to secure a religion-friendly university while paying deference to the academic standards of the modern university."39

CANONS AND PROFESSIONALISM

Parallel critiques have been launched in other fields of study. English and literature studies, in particular, have come under sharp attack as professions concerned primarily with the promotion and maintenance of their own power.40 Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital," the lit erary critic John Guillory provides an incisive analysis of how the idea of "expanding" the traditional Eurocentric canon or allowing that canon to be more "multicultural" constitutes window dressing for a much deeper and more fundamental feature of literary studies.41 Guillory characterizes cultural capital thus: "If there exists a form of capital which is specifically symbolic or cultural, the production, exchange, distribution, and consumption of this capital presupposes the division of society into groups that can be called classes."42

Guillory argues that the problem of constructing a canon, the general name for a privileged set of books, is a problem in "cultural capital," because mastering a particular set of books is a way to distribute power in a society. According to Guillory, canon construction and maintenance has little to do with literary quality, which is itself a social construct. Shakespeare is read not because it has any higher literary value than other works, but because "knowing Shakespeare" might function as a credential in elite circles. Furthermore, the individuals in control of canon formation are not the authors, since a "far larger role belongs to the school itself, which regulates access to literary production by regulating access to literacy, to the practices of reading and writing."43

On a broader scale, these sorts of studies are a critique of "professionalism," by which power is invested in knowledge specialists.44 In his classic study of this social phenomenon, Burton J. Bledstein sees professionalism in America as emerging with the middle class, particularly after the Civil War, when there was a surge in the number of professional organizations.45 Fully consistent with this

trend is the Society of Biblical Literature (and Exegesis), which was born in 1880.

One can, of course, detect Marxist theory behind such piquant critiques of professionalism and literary studies. But one need not be a Marxist to make these observations, and Guillory grants that Marx "undertheorized" the concept of class.46 Instead, Guillory and like-minded critics argue that relevant knowledge must be grounded in an awareness of how knowledge is used to create class distinctions and power differentials. Biblical scholars, for example, are almost solely devoted to maintaining the cultural significance of the Bible not because any knowledge it provides is relevant to our world but because of the self-serving drive to protect the power position of the biblical studies profession.

ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM AND OUR THESIS

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Richard Hofstadter acutely demonstrated that anti-intellectualism has a long history in America.41 In general, Hofstadter argued that American anti-intellectualism has been a response to the power that professionals have accumulated at the expense of the working class. Accordingly, readers might rightly wonder if we are simply engaging in another version of anti-intellectualism in challenging the existence of biblical academic studies. After all, why not extend our thesis to all ancient literature?

But we see false intellectualism and intellectual dishonesty in most efforts to maintain the relevance of the Bible. One example will suffice for now. In 1998, Howard Clark Kee, a widely respected New Testament scholar, coedited a volume with Irvin J. Borowsky titled Removing the Anti-Judaism from the New Testament. Anti-Jewish statements in the New Testament, indeed, have led to violence against Jews. But one solution proposed by Borowsky was this:

> The solution to erasing this hatred is for bible societies and religious publishers to produce two editions, one for the public similar to the Contemporary English Version which reduces significantly this anti-Judaic potential, and the other edition for scholars taken from the Greek text.48

What is being proposed here is nothing short of paternalistic deception. Borowsky and like-minded scholars know that parts of the Bible endorse and

promote hateful and violent speech against Jews, but instead of urging the world to move beyond dependence on the biblical text at all, they simply want to preserve it in sanitized form. The masses will get the sanitized Bible constructed for them by scholars, and only scholars will have the version that best corresponds to the original meaning.

Fixation on the Bible also diverts attention from the thousands of texts of other cultures that still lie untranslated. If we succeed, the Bible would become simply one of many ancient texts, no more or less worthy of attention for its historical, moral, or aesthetic value. Study would be centered on how alien the Bible is rather than on how compatible it is with modern society. While we can extend our critique to all ancient literature, we focus on what we perceive to be the most egregious and historically important example.

Another potential challenge to my thesis is that I myself would be hyp ocritical to continue in biblical studies. However, while I concede that this would be true if I were pursuing biblical studies for the sake of keeping the field alive, I have instead used my work in biblical studies to persuade people to abandon reliance on this book. I see my goal as no different from physicians, whose goal of ending human illness would lead to their eventual unemployment. The same holds true for me. I would be hypocritical only if I sought to maintain the relevance of my profession despite my belief that the profession is irrelevant. If I work to inform people of the irrelevance of the Bible for modern life, then I am fully consistent with my beliefs.

THE END OF EVERYTHING?

From a different angle, our work is part of the proliferation of books preoccupied with the finality of different aspects of the human experience. Perhaps the most famous recent example is Francis Fukuyama's The End of History and the Last Man (2002), in which he argued that liberal democracy constitutes the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution," so that we should expect no new historical developments in world history.49 Fukuyama's thesis, of course, has been misunderstood to mean that historical events would end. However, the truth is that he has a more Hegelian view of history, in which history ends when a sort of stasis in the development of new ideas is reached. According to Fukuyama, liberal democracy cannot be superseded and will triumph over any other competing political idea; people will see its advantages and will universally

adopt it. And so, in that sense, history will end.

Our thesis differs from Fukuyama's in several ways. First, I do not argue that the end of biblical studies will mean the end of history or even the end of religion. The end of biblical studies addresses only a part of a larger phenomenon we call religion. Our project addresses that part of religion that is expressed in textual or inscripturated forms, and more specifically the forms assumed in Judaism and Christianity. The end of religion might mean the end of history, insofar as I hold that secular approaches to life will result in the minimization of human suffering, though not its end. However, unlike Fukuyama, who sees liberal democracy as a sort of panacea, I hold that scarce resources are so inherent on our planet that liberal democracy is only part of a solution that must include secular humanism to truly mean "the end" of history.so

Our thesis is contraposed to that of Richard Horsley, who sees the purpose of religious and biblical studies as being in part "to enable students of religion to develop a criticism of imperial power and its effects."51 As John Roth notes, Horsley is simply substituting his own hegemonic view of what biblical studies should be for what he deems inadequate.52 More importantly, Horsley exemplifies the scholarship that doesn't deem New Testament Christianity to be itself an imperialist project from the start. Horsley sees the rise of Christianity as a response to the hegemony of the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean world. But he fails to see that movements that form to resist empire usually have as their goal the extablishment of their own empire.53

Mine is a frank secular humanist view of biblical studies. And rather than pretend I am not hegemonic, I hold that (1) all worldviews, even those that claim pluralism, are hegemonic because they inevitably seek power over those that have a nonpluralistic worldview, and (2) a pluralistic religious hegemony is a politically expedient means to persuade people to adopt a secular humanist hegemony, which I believe holds the best prospect for a better global society. Phrased more frankly, religious pluralism is good so long as it does not interfere with secular humanism's goals.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

My realization that modern biblical studies should be abolished did not come

overnight. Rather, it came after a sustained period of healthy self-criticism. Briefly, I grew up in a Pentecostal Protestant home, and I became a child evangelist soon after immigrating to the United States in the 1960s. During high school I decided to become a biblical scholar in order to fight atheism and other religions. In the process, I realized that I had no better grounds for my belief than the believer in any other religion. I saw that atheism was the most honest choice I could make.

However, I did not abandon biblical studies because of atheism. Instead, I grew more curious about where this book had actually originated and how it had come to be the most influential book in history. So I entered the University of Arizona in the hope of becoming a biblical archaeologist. Unfortunately, illness made me shift to a more literary and historical study of the Bible. At the University of Arizona, I encountered the exciting ideas and work of William G. Dever, who at that time had the most vibrant program in Near Eastern archaeology in the world. In 1983, I went to Harvard University, and earned a Master of Theological Studies (1985) and a PhD (1991) in Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic philology in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

While still an undergraduate at the University of Arizona, I joined the Society of Biblical Literature in an effort to familiarize myself with the latest discussions and to begin integrating myself into the organization whose members would later accept or reject me in my search for academic employment. I made many friends in the society, and I have collaborated on some important projects sponsored by the SBL, including a forthcoming book on disabilities in biblical studies.54

I remember the excitement of my first annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 1982, at the Hilton in New York City. Many bearers of famous names strolled the halls. I remember my embarrassment as I flagged down one heralded scholar, only to realize that I had called him by the wrong name. I remember sitting in small table discussion with Norman Geisler, a dean of Christian apologetics. The topic was the state of creationism in the aftermath of the famous trial in Arkansas.55

Before receiving my PhD in 1991, I had already published a refereed critical note in the Journal of Biblical Literature, the primary publication of the SBL,

and probably the most important journal in the field.56 In that year, I also obtained my first employment as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where I had a joint appointment in religious studies and anthropology.

My enthusiasm for the field was immense then. But I began to see that despite good scholars and good discussions, the bulk of the SBL membership was intent on beating a dead horse. The more I learned about all the major discoveries in biblical studies, the more I saw that fewer and fewer papers had anything new to say. What they did say was either bland, ambiguous, or outright fatuous. Since 1982, I have encountered only about a dozen truly memorable papers.

My papers were not much better. I read papers on textual criticism, healthcare, and many other subjects. But I was becoming increasingly introspective about why I was doing research in those particular subjects. More and more influenced by the idea that the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake is simply another way of describing an elite leisure pursuit, I became distressed at how few papers actually centered on the idea that knowledge is meant to help people live in a better world.

In 2004 there was a definite shift in what I read at the SBL Annual Meeting. I no longer was content to help academic biblical studies remain afloat. I wanted to reform biblical studies. Part of it was driven by my work on violence in the Bibles' I was distressed to see that biblical scholars would discuss biblical violence, and even acknowledge that it should no longer be tolerable, but few, if any, were willing to repudiate the Bible for its endorsement of violence.58 After my book Fighting Words was published in 2005, I decided to take what I had learned to its logical conclusion and write a book advocating the end of biblical studies as we know it.

ORGANIZATION

Our critique is organized into two parts. Part 1, consisting of chapters 1 through 6, details how the major subdisciplines of biblical studies are still dominated by religionist agendas despite the claim that they are using scientific and/or critical approaches. These subdisciplines include translation, textual criticism, historical and archaeological criticism, literary criticism, and biblical theology. Part 1 also

contains concrete examples of how the major findings of those subdisciplines form an argument for the irrelevance of the Bible in modern society.

Chapter 1 ("Translations") focuses on how translations, which are the main source of the Bible's relevance for the masses, are more about hiding what the Bible says than they are about actually reflecting its original meaning and context. Chapter 2 ("Textual Criticism") addresses the failure of textual criticism to reconstruct the "original" text of the Bible. Chapter 3 ("History and Archaeology: Fields Full of Holes") shows how all the major findings of historians and archaeologists have served to ruin previous confidence in the "history" supposedly related in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. Chapter 4 ("The Unhistorical Jesus") examines the failure of academic biblical studies to recover the historical Jesus.

In chapter 5 ("Literary Criticism: Aesthetics as Apologetics") we turn our lens to the practice of "literary criticism," which is simply another instrument to keep the Bible alive by claiming that it possesses literary and aesthetic merit superior to other works of literature. Chapter 6 ("Biblical Theology") deconstructs the discipline of biblical theology, describing it as a flawed effort to outline a coherent message about the biblical God.

Part 2, spanning chapters 7 through 10, focuses on the infrastructure of biblical studies, and particularly the economic and political institutions and mechanisms by which the profession maintains its relevance despite the findings of its subdisciplines. Chapter 7 ("Academia") shows how academia, despite its commitment to scientific and secular modes of research, has allowed religious studies to remain dominated by religionist and theological agendas. Chapter 8 ("The Society of Biblical Literature") deconstructs the religious agendas of the largest professional organizations that support biblical scholars, with a more particular focus on the Society of Biblical Literature.

Chapter 9 outlines the intimate relationship between the media (book and magazine publishers and the film industry) and academia in order to show that biblical scholars rather than being engaged in objective scholarship about the Bible are most frequently in the service of communities of faith. A conclusion (chapter 10) will summarize my results and outline what we might do to close the book on the religionist agendas in the modern academic study of the Bible.

SUMMARY

Biblical studies as we know it should end. We should now treat the Bible as the alien document it is, with no more importance than the other works of literature we ignore every day. Biblical studies should be geared toward helping humanity wean itself off of the Bible and toward terminating its authority completely in the modem world. Focus then could shift to the still thousands of other ancient texts still untranslated and unread. One day, the Bible might even be viewed as one of the curiosities of a tragic bibliolatrous age, when dependence on a text brought untold misery and stood as an obstacle to human progress. We might then study the Bible as a lesson in why human beings should never again privilege any book to this extent.

NOTES

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2. For a standard history of the Society of Biblical Literature, see Ernest W. Saunders, Searching the Scriptures: A History of the Society of Biblical Literature, 1880-1980 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982).

3. Jon D. Levenson, The Hebrew Bible, The Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), p. 30.

4. Paul G. Wiebe, "The Place of Theology in Religious Studies," in The Aca demic Study of Religion: 1975: Public Schools Religion Studies: 1975, ed. Anne Carr and Nicholas Piediscalzi (Missoula, MT: American Academy of Religion, 1975), p. 24.

5. Michael Coogan, "The Great Gulf between Scholars and the Pew," in Biblical Studies Alternatively: An Introductory Reader, ed. Susanne Scholz

(Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), p. 7.

6. George Gallup and Jim Castelli, The People's Religion: American Faith in the 90s (New York: Macmillan, 1989), p. 6. Despite the title, the book reports on polls conducted in the 1980s.

7. Ibid., p. 60.

8. Ibid., p. 8.

9. For a general treatment of the Beatitudes, see Hans D. Betz, Essays on the Sermon on the Mount, trans. L. L. Welborn (Philadelphia: Fortress 1985), especially pp. 17-36; for a detailed survey of connections with the Hebrew Bible and rabbinical sources, see W. D. Davies, The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

10. See Leonard J. Greenspoon, "What Americans Believe about the Bible," BR 21, no. 5 (Winter 2005): 29.

11. Marie Wachlin, Bible Literacy Report: What Do American Teens Need to Know and What Do They Know? (Front Royal, VA: Bible Literacy Project, 2006), p. 25; available at http://www.bibleliteracy.org/Secure/Documents/BibleLiteracyReport2005.pdf (accessed August 27, 2006).

12. Wachlin, Bible Literacy Report, p. 35.

13. Greenspoon, "What Americans Believe," p. 29.

14. Christopher Bader et al., American Piety in the 21st Century: New Insights into the Depth and Complexity of Religion in the U.S. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Institute for Studies of Religion, 2006), p. 14, table 2; available online at http://www.baylor.edu/isreligion/index.php?id=40634 (accessed September 12, 2006).

15. Coogan, "The Great Gulf," p. 7.

16. Ian Markham, "Teaching Theology in a Modern University," Theology 94, no. 760 (1991): 260-69.

17. On a more anecdotal level, I also conduct surveys of incoming students in my Bible classes at Iowa State University. One of the questions I ask is "How familiar are you with the Bible?" Inevitably, the vast majority of those who signal great familiarity at the start of the course are shown to have a false sense of familiarity.

18. Markham, "Teaching Theology," p. 267.

19. For an earlier and influential study of the role of religion in British universities, see Walter H. Moberly, The Crisis in the University (New York: Macmillan, 1949).

20. Daniel J. Estes, "Audience Analysis and Validity in Application," BS 150 (April-June 1993): 219-29.

21. Ibid., p. 224.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., p. 227.

24. John Bright, The Authority of the Old Testament (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), p. 152. For a thoroughly unsatisfactory and desperate attempt to argue that Old Testament laws are still relevant, see Joe M. Sprinkle, Biblical Law and Its Relevance: A Christian Understanding and Ethical Application for Today of the Mosaic Regulations (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006).

25. We refrain from saying "100 pecent" because there are a small number of Christian scholars who do realize that modern Bibles are constructs, which may bear little similarity to "the original."

26. I depend on these editions for the lectures of 1902, 1903, and 1904: Friedrich Delitzsch, Babel and Bibel: Ein Vortrag, 4th ed. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1903); Zweiter Vortrag uber Babel and Bibel, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlag-Anstalt, 1904); Babel and Bibel: Dritter (Schluss-) Vortrag, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlag-Anstalt, 1905). For a comprehensive edition, see Reinhard G. Lehmann, Friedrich Delitzsch and der Babel-Bibel Streit

(Freiburg: Universitatverslag; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994); see also Bill T. Arnold and David B. Weisberg, "A Centennial Review of Friedrich Delitzsch's `Babel and Bibel' Lectures," JBL 121 (2002): 441-57; Joel Sweek, "The Monuments, the Babel-Bibel Streit and Responses to Historical Criticism," in The Pitcher Is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gdsta Ahlstrom, ed. Steven W. Holloway and Lowell K. Handy (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 401-19.

27. I depend on this edition, in which two volumes, each with separate pagination, are bound into one: Friedrich Delitzsch, Die Grosse Tauschung, Erster Teil, Kritische Betrachtungen zu des alttestamentlichen Berichten uber Israels Eindringen in Kanaan, die Gottesoffenbarung vom Sinai and die Wirksamkeit der Propheten (Stuttgart/Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1921); Friedrich Delitzsch, Die Grosse Tauschung, Zweiter (Schluss-)Teil, Fortgesetzte kritische Betrachtungen zum Alten Testament, vornehmlich den Prophetenschriften and Psalmen, nebst Schlussfolgerungen (Stuttgart/Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1921).

28. Delitzsch, Die Grosse Tauschung, 1:95: "Aber alle these alttestamentlichen Bucher von Genesis his Daniel haben in religiosen Beziehung fur uns Jetztlebenden, insbesondere fur uns Christen, schlechterdings keine Bedeutung." My translation.

29. Ibid., 1:97: "Das sog. `Alte Testament' is fur die christliche Kirche and damit fur die christliche Familie vollkommen entbehrlich." I translated "Familie" as "community," though "family" may also be appropriate.

30. Philip Davies, "Do We Need Biblical Scholars?" The Bible and Interpretation, June 2005, available online at http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Davies-Biblical -Scholars.htm (accessed July 2, 2006).

31. Jacques Berlinerblau, The Secular Bible: Why Nonbelievers Must Take Religion Seriously (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 11: "The problem with modern biblical research is that it has not gone far enough. Too often, it has deferred to tradition, censured itself, and refused to pursue the delectably blasphemous implications of its own discoveries."

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33. For an edition of the "Jefferson Bible," see Thomas Jefferson, The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1942).

34. Russell T. McCutcheon, Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Russell T. McCutcheon, The Discipline of Religion: Structure, Meaning, Rhetoric (London: Routledge, 2003).

35. Timothy Fitzgerald, The Ideology of Religious Studies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 6.

36. Ibid., p. 7.

37. For recent examples of the debate over the existence of religion itself, see the exchanges between Robert A. Segal and Russell McCutcheon in the Journal of the American Academy of Religion 73, no. 1 (2005): 720-56.

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39. Ibid.

40. See also Gerald Graff, Professing Literature: An Institutional History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). For a recent defense of the academic study of literature, see Frank B. Farrell, Why Does Literature Matter? (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004). See also the Special Topic issue of the PMLA ("The History of the Book and the Idea of Literature," PMLA 121, no. 1 [January 2006]), especially the contribution from Peter D. McDonald, "Ideas of the Book and Histories of Literature," pp. 214-28.

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26; Christopher Ricks, "What Is at Stake in the `Battle of the Books?'" New Criterion (September 1989): 40-44. For reactions to these developments, see Terry Eagleton, After Theory (New York: Penguin, 2004) and Thomas Docherty, After Theory: Postmodernism /Postmarxism (London: Routledge, 1990).

42. Guillory, Cultural Capital, p. viii. For Bourdieu's relevant work, see Pierre Bourdieu, Homo Academicus, trans. Peter Collier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) and Pierre Bourdieu, Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture, trans. Richard Nice (London: Sage, 1977).

43. Guillory, Cultural Capital, p. ix.

44. Burton J. Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America (New York: Norton & Norton, 1976). For a massive study of the current state of the academic profession, see Jack H. Schuster and Martin J. Finkelstein, The American Faculty: The Restructuring of Academic World and Careers (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

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46. Guillory, Cultural Capital, p. viii.

47. Richard Hofstadter, Anti-intellectualism in American Life (New York: Vintage Books, 1963). See also Mark Sedgwick, Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

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51. Richard A. Horsley, "Religion and Other Products of Empire," JAAR 71, no. 1 (2003): 40.

52. See John K. Roth, "Response: Constructing and Deconstructing Empires," JAAR 71, no. 1 (2003): 121-28.

53. Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, ed. Kenneth Thompson (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1993), see especially pp. 50-51.

54. Hector Avalos, Sarah Melcher, and Jeremy Schipper, eds. This Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies (Atlanta: Scholars Press, forthcoming).

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Part 1

HOW THE MAIN SUBDISCIPLINES OF BIBLICAL STUDIES CONCEAL THE IRRELEVANCE OF THE BIBLE

e first part of our argument affirms that the main subdisciplines of biblical studies have succeeded in demonstrating that the Bible is the product of cultures whose values and beliefs about the origin, nature, and purpose of our world are no longer held to be relevant, even by most Christians and Jews. These subdisciplines include translation, biblical history and archaeology, historical Jesus studies, literary criticism, and biblical theology. More importantly, we demonstrate that despite this insight these subdisciplines continue to devote themselves to maintaining the illusion that the Bible is relevant. Such efforts also serve to maintain the relevance of the elite leisure pursuit called biblical studies.

Chapter 1

TRANSLATIONS: HIDING IN PLAIN SENSE

nsofar as the general public is concerned, nothing maintains the relevance of the Bible more than translations. According to one estimate, by the year 2000, the Bible had been translated into more than two thousand languages.' If it were not for the translations that made the Bible accessible to countless millions of people over the centuries, it would probably have been forgotten. Nearly as much is admitted in a report of a meeting of church leaders, which concluded that "[t]he difficulty of modern man to see the relevance of the Bible in his life is one of the main impediments in the effective use of the Bible. The Bible Societies are, therefore, encouraged to provide aids to the readers."2

Indeed, the Bible is such a foreign text that translators and scholars become assistants to the reader. The preface to the New Century Bible says: "Ancient customs are often unfamiliar to modem readers ... so these are clarified either in the text or in a footnote."3 But even more surprising is the assumption that the relevance of the Bible is best maintained by using translation to hide and distort the original meaning of the text in order to provide the illusion that the information and values conveyed by biblical authors are compatible with those of the modern world.

In this chapter, we will provide a general overview of translation theory, as well as concrete examples of how Bible translators maintain the relevance of the Bible by distorting and even erasing what is said in the original languages.4 We are not referring to cases where there may be honest differences of opinion about the meaning of a word. Instead, we focus on cases where it is clear that the translators should know that the translation does not correspond to what is found in the biblical texts being translated. This may also mean that significant words are omitted or added, not just mistranslated. In short, we outline a few of the many topics and examples where Bible translations "lie" to keep the Bible alive.

BASIC TRANSLATION THEORY

The famous Italian phrase traduttore, traditore (translator, traitor) has become a

standard cliche when speaking of the work of the translator. It reflects the idea that translations are, by their nature, an act of betrayal to the intentions of the original author. In one sense, this is too simplistic because as George Steiner, the famous translation theorist, notes, "a human being performs an act of translation, in the full sense of the word, when receiving a speech-message from any other human being."5 In other words, every message must be translated, even ordinary messages received in the language we speak every day.

If we look at the entire history of translation, two polar positions about its feasibility have been outlined.' One position argues that all translation is impossible. This is exemplified in a famous tract by the Spanish essayist Jose Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955), who, in speaking of translation, said that "none of those things can be accomplished, they are in and of themselves impossible, mere pretense, a meaningless project, and a helpless gesture."' While he acknowledged that scientific and mathematical translations were relatively more accurate, he added that they were so because they created a pseudolanguage of their own. A milder expression of this idea is echoed by the evangelical Christian historian and translator Philip Schaff, who said, "A translation is an interpretation. Absolute reproduction is impossible in any work."8

At the other extreme is a position voiced by Philip Mauro, a contributor to The Fundamentals, the famous anthology of tracts that popularized the word "fundamentalist." He believed that the Bible, unlike any other book, is able to "adapt itself perfectly ... and to speak with equal directness, clearness and authority to all peoples, tribes, and nations in their mother tongue."9 This idea derives from the theological conclusion that God authored the Bible in order to be understood by humans. Of course, many other Christian groups have thought and continue to think the opposite in viewing the Bible as full of hidden and obscure information.

Sometimes, those who believe the Bible to be perfectly translatable also advocate the idea of formal equivalence, or a word-for-word correspondence. The simplistic nature of word-for-word translations can be easily demonstrated by considering how a modern English expression such as "trick or treat" might not make any sense to a Chinese peasant. Even if Chinese and English words correspond exactly, "trick or treat" cannot be translated word for word without some knowledge of the cultural context (a Halloween greeting) in which it is used in the United States. Otherwise, a Chinese peasant greeted with the Chinese

words corresponding to "trick," "or," and "treat" would interpret the phrase as nonsense.

These sorts of problems are why many translators opt for what is called a "sense" translation approach. Modern variants include "dynamic equivalence" or "functional equivalence." This approach was already championed by Cicero in the first century BCE.10 In biblical translation, the earliest systematic exposition of the use of "sense" rather than "word-for-word" translation appears in a letter written by Jerome (ca. 340-420), whose Latin Vulgate became the official translation of the Catholic Church. In that letter, Jerome addresses critics who complain that his translations do not follow the word of God with exactitude. Jerome responds: "I myself not only admit but liberally announce that my translations of the Greeks (excepting the holy scriptures where even the order of the words is a mystery) are not word for word but rather sense extracted from sense."1'

Jerome, in his usual acute polemical style, quickly dismantled the supposition that the advocates of "word-for-word" translation were following their own principle. He noted, for example, that even Gospel writers do not translate Jesus' speech word for word. One case in point is the Aramaic phrase "Talitha cumi," found in Mark 5:41 (RSV), which Jesus uses to command a girl who had died to rise. The Gospel of Mark is written in Greek for Greek speakers, and so the author had to translate Jesus' Aramaic into Greek. But instead of just "Damsel, arise," which is all the Aramaic would mean in a word-for-word translation, the author of Mark translates it as "Damsel, I say to thee, arise." As Jerome observed, the words "I say to thee" are not in the Aramaic portion. Mark himself did not translate word for word.

However, other theorists argue that the distinction between formal equivalence and "sense" or functional equivalence is itself suspect. Maria Tymoczko claims that "the distinctions between literal and free, or formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence, are not so great nor so useful as they would appear to be."'Z More importantly, many theorists have come to see translation, whether free or more literal, as being inherently ideological. Theo Hermans, one of today's leading translation theorists, remarks, "From the point of view of the target literature, all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose."13

The fact is that the main goal underlying all biblical translations for the past millennia is the same, regardless of whether one uses a "word-for-word" or "sense" translation. Historically, the usual stated objective has been to render the text of the Bible meaningful to modern readers. And therein lies the fundamental problem-the culture and concepts of the Bible are so foreign that translators must often deliberately conceal the original meaning and context in order to make it relevant today. Accurately transferring the meaning, to the extent we can even determine the real meaning, becomes secondary to making the text relevant. As we shall see, sometimes we don't have to make this accusation, as the translators themselves will admit to it.

DYNAMIC/FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE

The primary modern example of the effort to suppress the actual meaning and culture of the biblical authors while claiming not to do so is found in the socalled dynamic equivalence or functional equivalence methods of translation. These are perhaps the most dominant approaches in modern translations of the Bible, and they are applied in the New International Version (NIV), Today's New International Version (TNIV), The Contemporary English Version (CEV), and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which account for the largest shares of the American market (see the appendix Bible Versions: A Brief Guide).

Dynamic equivalence (also known as functional equivalence) was pioneered by Eugene Nida (1914-), who many consider the most influential biblical translation theorist of modern times. In one article in Christianity Today, Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, a critic of Nida, says, "If you read a Bible translated in the last half-century, you probably read a Bible influenced by Nida." 14 Van Leeuwen also notes that "even secular translators pay homage to Nida."15 Though he has been reviled by some conservative evangelicals, Nida now receives mostly praise from academic biblical scholars. In 2004, for example, the Society of Biblical Literature published an homage to Eugene Nida titled Let the Words Be Written: The Lasting Influence of Eugene A. Nida.16 Even some evangelical Christians have come to see him as an icon, as evidenced by repeated features in the evangelical periodical Christianity Today.

Born in Oklahoma City in 1914, Nida grew up in Southern California. He received all of his higher education in public universities, including a PhD in

linguistics from the University of Michigan in 1943. At Michigan he studied with renowned anthropological linguists, including Kenneth Pike. He was ordained in the Northern Baptist Convention. For most of his career he was associated with the American Bible Society, and he soon acquired a reputation as perhaps the most important translation theorist of his generation. Now, the American Bible Society has named a whole institute after him (The Eugene A. Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship)."

To be fair, Nida's concept of "dynamic equivalence" has evolved, and one must be cautious not to attribute to Nida all the various versions of dynamic equivalence that have been applied by other translators.18 Nevertheless, it is useful to begin with Nida's own definition of dynamic equivalence:

> [The] quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the RESPONSE of the RECEPTOR is essentially like that of the original receptors. Frequently, the form of the original text is changed; but as long as the change follows the rules of back transformation in the source language, of contextual consistency in the transfer, and of transformation in the receptor language, the message is preserved and the translation is faithful. The opposite principal [sic] is formal correspondence.19

The basic principle of dynamic/functional equivalence is to use translations that would make sense in the reader's culture rather than exact-word equivalents. One famous example is how "lamb of God" found in John 1:29 ("Behold, the lamb of God") should be translated among the Eskimo. A lamb is culturally irrelevant to Eskimo society, and so the whole sacrificial meaning of the expression, as applied to Christ, would be incomprehensible to an Eskimo.20 Therefore, one could use "seal of God" since Eskimos kill seals. Translating the name of the actual animal matters less than the "sense" of killing an animal held to be innocent.

In fact, such translational strategies and issues have been articulated for centuries in Christian thought. Martin Luther, whose translation of the Bible into German is often credited with standardizing the German language itself, used a version of dynamic equivalence when it came to explaining Romans 3:28. In that verse he had inserted the word "alone" in the sentence that reads in the RSV: "For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works of law." Luther

made the phrase "by faith alone" (allein durch den Glauben). Catholics protested that the word "alone" was not in the original Greek, and accused Luther of inserting it to promote his theological agenda that human beings can be saved by faith alone rather than also by performing the sacraments of the Church. Luther's response reads like a manifesto for dynamic equivalence:

> I know quite well that here in Romans 3:28 that in the Latin and Greek text the word "solum" [alone] is not present, and so Papists need not lecture me about such a fact.... But one must not ask the experts in Latin about what the German language should say, as these Jackasses do, but one must ask the mother of the house, the child in the street, the simple man in the market ... and one must speak German with them.21

But even if we granted that "dynamic/functional equivalence" is better than "formal equivalence," the fact remains that "functional" equivalence represents the continuing effort to maintain the value of biblical texts by distorting, minimizing, or erasing original meanings that modern cultures would find objectionable. So, in some ways, dynamic/functional equivalence privileges the target language (the language for which the translation is meant) over the source language (the language from which the translation is made). Nida goes even further, specifying that "the use of language by persons twenty-five to thirty years of age has priority over the language of the older people or of children."22

Indeed, Today's New International Version bills itself as a translation made to circumvent the perception of the Bible as a foreign text by the coveted eighteen-to thirty-four-year-old market. Consider Today's New International Version's promotional description:

> One group especially in need are 18-to 34-year-olds. Barna Research Group estimates that 8 million 18-to 34-year-olds are on the verge of leaving the church. But there is hope. Thom Rainer's research shows that 18-to 34-year-olds are the most spiritually open age demographic.
>
> With advancements in biblical scholarship, clarity and gender accuracy, the TNIV is a new translation that will engage today's younger generations with God's word. To further Bible engagement, the TNIV will be published in innovative formats to help 18-to 34-year olds experience the mystery and wonder of the Bible.23

So, even by its own accounts, the TNIV acknowledges that market share is an important consideration in how its translation is structured. As we shall see, the TNIV, in particular, is sensitive to the changes in attitudes toward gender equality in our society.

POLITICALLY CORRECT POLYTHEISM

Our first example deals with polytheism, which most modern Christian readers of the Bible would disdain as idolatry. Most modern readers probably expect that the Bible does not endorse polytheism. Consider the following translation of Deuteronomy 32:8-9 in the New American Bible (NAB), an American Catholic translation:

> When the Most High assigned the nations their heritage, when he parceled out the descendants of Adam, He set up the boundaries of the peoples after the number of the sons of God; While the LORD's own portion was Jacob, his hereditary share was Israel.

Most readers will miss the fact that "the Most High" and "the LORD" are two different gods, among many other gods, here. The term translated as "the Most High" is probably the name of a god, pronounced as Elyon, and the term translated as "LORD" corresponds to the Hebrew name we pronounce as Yahweh, ancient Israel's main god.

The polytheistic nature of this passage became better understood in light of the monumental discoveries, beginning in 1929, of texts at a city called Ras Shamra, in modern Syria. Ras Shamra actually contained the remains of an ancient city called Ugarit, which flourished in the fourteenth century BCE. Ugarit yielded a mountain of texts in Ugaritic, a language related to Hebrew, but theretofore unknown to modern scholars.24 Ugaritic texts confirmed that some of the names for Israel's deities probably derived from pre-Israelite cultures, and the name "Elyon" could be found, principally as an epithet, but also perhaps as an independent deity.25

In other West Semitic cultures, "Elyon" is more clearly a separate deity. For example, in the Sefire Inscriptions, which contain a treaty between two kings (Bir-Gayah and Matiel) written in Aramaic, and dated to the eighth century BCE, we find a list of witnesses, which includes this statement: "in the presence

of 'El and `Elyan."26 Although the respected scholars Eric E. Elnes and Patrick D. Miller doubt that "El and Elyon" refer to separate deities here, the fact is that every other pair, divine or not, mentioned in that list (e.g., "Marduk and Zarpanit ... Day and Night ... Heaven and Earth") refers to separate entities. Accordingly, El and Elyon should also be viewed as separate entities.27

Consequently, some scholars have argued that in Deuteronomy 32:8-9 "the Most High" probably also refers to the god "Elyon," who is represented as superior to, and separate from, Yahweh. Yahweh appears to be Elyon's son. Elyon divided up the earth, and Elyon's son, Yahweh (LORD), received the portion of the earth that came to be known as Israel .21

The more obvious case of polytheism is the reference to what the NAB translates as "the sons of God." In most pantheons of the ancient Near East, the gods were believed to have divine fathers and mothers. The Dead Sea Scrolls (henceforth, DSS), which are the oldest manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, still preserve the probably older reading of "sons of El" or "sons of Elohim." The "sons of El" would be the gods fathered by the god named El. The fact that ancient editors recognized the polytheistic nature of this expression ("sons of El") probably led the editors of the standard text (called the Masoretic text) of the Hebrew Bible to change "gods" to "sons of Israel." Some Greek translations have "angels of God" instead of "sons of El" or "gods."29

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), an American multidenominational translation, does adopt the more original polytheistic expression, "according to the number of the gods," reflected in the DSS. However, other modern translations still do not fully reflect the polytheism of the passage. Note the following examples from the Revised English Bible (REB), a British ecumenical version, and the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), a British Catholic translation.

REB: "according to the number of the sons of God."

NJB: "according to the number of the children of God."

Note that the NJB bears a gender-neutral rendition ("children") instead of the more culturally proper "sons," who were the main inheritors of land in biblical cultures. Political correctness in the NJB, therefore, also obscures the patriarchal

nature of land inheritance in the Bible.

CREATING MISTRANSLATIONS

One of the most persistent areas in which mistranslation still creates widespread problems is Genesis 1. The biblical creation story is so foreign to modern cosmology that only mistranslation can give the illusion that Genesis and modern science are in harmony. Robert Jastrow, the noted astronomer, writes in God and the Astronomers: "The details differ, but the essential elements in the astronomical and biblical accounts of Genesis are the same: the chain of events leading to man commenced suddenly and sharply at a definite moment in time, in a flash of light and energy."30 Jastrow can say this only because he relies on bad translations of Genesis.

Let's begin with Genesis 1:1, which reads as follows in the NRSV: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth." Indeed, most translations have "God." However, "God" is a rendering made on the assumption that the Hebrew author was a monotheist. Genesis itself shows that he probably was not, given the use of plurals in 1:26, "Let us make humankind." The word translated "God" is probably best translated as the name of the specific god named "Elohim." If one were to be even more literal, one might note that Elohim is actually a plural noun, which could be translated as "gods."

Although singular verbs used with Elohim make clear that he is regarded as a single deity here in Genesis 1, it is also possible that editors changed plural verbs to singular verbs. We have at least one text in which editors may have not yet erased the polytheism, and that is 2 Samuel 7:23, which the RSV translates as:

> What other nation on earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name, and doing for them great and terrible things, by driving out before his people a nation and its gods?

But what the RSV (and NRSV) translated as "God went" bears a completely plural expression, including a plural verb, in Hebrew (b'-,15N 1D57; haleku 'elohim). If this is not an outright mistake, then it bears witness to a residual polytheism.

In any case, Genesis 1:1 should be more accurately translated as the first part of a sentence that ends in verse 3, something noticed already by Rashi, the medieval Jewish commentator. Today Harry M. Orlinsky and many other scholars argue cogently for this translation.31 Note the alternative and more accurate rendition, usually relegated to a footnote by NRSV: "When God began to create the heavens and the earth ..." Verse 2 forms a parenthesis explaining the condition of the earth before the first creative act, which is the creation of light in verse 3. Thus, Verses 1-3 form a single sentence that could more literally be translated as follows:

> When Elohim began to shape the heavens and the dry land-the dry land being then formless and empty, and darkness on the face of the waters, and the breath of Elohim blowing over the waters-Elohim said: "Let there be light."

Accordingly, Genesis 1:1-3 does not describe creation out of nothing (creatio ex nihilo), but rather the story begins with something already there.32 What is there is a dark and chaotic mass of water stirred by a wind, presumably the very breath of Elohim. Many gods, including Yahweh, were viewed as blowing air through their own mouths and noses (see Exodus 15:8, 10). Verse 10 explicitly tells us that the Hebrew word ('aretz) translated as "earth" refers specifically to dry land, not the planet as we know it. The English word "create" translates the Hebrew word pronounced bara' which in Genesis 1 refers mostly to Elohim's shaping of a preexisting watery chaotic mass rather than to the creation from nothing of any original "stuff."33

In sum, Jastrow is wrong. Genesis is not essentially the same story in either concept or sequence as the big bang. According to big bang theory, the flash of light and energy preceded the creation of water and the mass out of which the Earth was formed. In Genesis, a chaotic body of water existed before the creation of light. Some of the entities in Genesis are formed separately from the light of verse 3, and are not viewed as contained within, or originating from, the flash of any Big Bang. There is no big bang in Genesis.

Erasing contradictions between Genesis 1 and 2 has been another task undertaken by some translators. Most modem critical scholars recognize that Genesis 1 and 2 contain contradictory accounts of creation. Briefly, in Genesis 1, all animals are created before the human male and female, who are created

together on the sixth day (Genesis 1:26-31). In Genesis 2, however, the human male is created first and alone (v. 7), followed by all of the animals (vv. 19-20), which are followed by the human female (vv. 21-22). Both sequences cannot be correct.

Verses 18 and 19 of Genesis 2 are crucial in establishing that the animals were created after the human male, who had been alone up to that point:

> Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.
>
> (Genesis 2:18-19)

However, the New International Version (NIV), which has an evangelical Christian viewpoint, renders verse 19 as "Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air." This rendition erases the contradiction because "had formed" could mean that the animals had been formed before Adam, as in Genesis 1. However, when speaking of the origin of the human male in verse 7, the NIV translates as a simple past (formed) the same Hebrew form of the verb (yatzar; 121) found in verse 19. Since the Hebrew shows no difference in the form of the verb, the inconsistency in the NIV's translation seems solely motivated by an attempt at nullifying the contradiction.

Worse still is the harmonizing attempt of the New World Translation (NWT), published by the Watchtower and Tract Society, whose members are commonly known as Jehovah's Witnesses. They translate 2:19 as "Now Jehovah God was forming from the ground every wild beast of the The use of the progressive past tense "was forming" helps to hide the contradiction by making it appear as though the animals could have been formed prior to the formation of the man. Yet in 2:7, the NWT translates the same verb as "proceeded to form."

Michael Coogan, the noted biblical scholar and educator, is certainly aware of these harmonizing techniques, when he notes that

> one area especially lacking courage is Bible translation. Many translations do not convey exactly what the original biblical languages-Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek-say. In this way translators avoid shocking people by making the Bible seem like one book with internal consistency, rather than an anthology, exhibiting developments of doctrines and a concomitant inconsistency.34

I would add that translators are also self-serving, as they realize that their livelihood depends on selling translations with features, such as internal consistency, they believe their readers want.

NUMEROUS MISTRANSLATIONS

If the contradictions in Genesis 1 and 2 might be defended on the basis of the sometimes-slippery interpretation of words, such defenses are not so easy when dealing with numbers. Consider the following translations from the NRSV, which accurately renders the Hebrew standard text:

> Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign; he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. (2 Kings 24:8)

> Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign; he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. (2 Chronicles 36:9)

Clearly, King Jehoiachin cannot be both eighteen and eight when he began to reign. It is not likely, given other biblical texts, that there is a second reign. Even Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, both staunch Christian apologists, acknowledge the contradiction but attribute it to a "copyist error" rather than to an error in the original manuscripts.35 Of course, this is mere supposition by Geisler and Howe, as we do not have the original manuscripts of any biblical writing.

Nonetheless, the New World Translation, the New American Bible, and the New Jerusalem Bible excise the contradiction by using "eighteen years old" in 2 Chronicles 36:9. Clearly, the NWT, NAB, and NJB do not translate the Hebrew text that is actually there. This is not a case where functional equivalence differs

from formal equivalence. Rather, translators have made the judgment that the number "eighteen" is correct, and should be inserted even if the text of 2 Chronicles 36:9 does not actually say that. A typical reader would not know of the contradiction without consulting the original language.

In the famous story recorded in 1 Samuel 17:49-51, David the shepherd boy kills a giant named Goliath from the Philistine city of Gath. Being from Gath, Goliath is described as a Gittite. However, the Hebrew text of 2 Samuel 21:19 says that a man named Elhanan killed Goliath the Gittite. The NRSV, REV, NAB, and NJB all translate this accurately, despite the contradiction that is apparent. The King James Version, however, removes the contradiction with this translation: "Elhanan ... slew the brother of Goliath." The KJV is "lying" here, for the words "the brother of' are not in the Hebrew text.36 Again, the difference between formal and functional equivalence is not at stake, and, in any case, the KJV is usually regarded as being a formal equivalence translation.

In fact, this attempt at harmonizing the contradiction concerning David and Goliath probably began with the biblical author of 1 Chronicles 20:5, whose version of the earlier story in 2 Samuel says "Elhanan ... slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, whose spear staff was like a weaver's beam" (KJV). The KJV, therefore, probably just transferred "the brother of' found in 1 Chronicles 20:5 to 2 Samuel 21:19. Note, however, that the KJV picks and chooses, as it does not transfer the name Lahmi.

Many biblical scholars surmise that the more original story, if accurate at all, was probably that a man named Elhanan killed Goliath.37 It is less likely that the credit for an act universally known to have been performed by the famous David would have been transferred to someone of lesser-known status. It is more likely that someone famous was given credit for what a lesser-known person did. And Elhanan, indeed, has been forgotten by most readers. The insertion of "the brother of' by the KJV also helps refute the common defense that there were two Goliaths. Why would it have been necessary to insert "the brother of' if it were widely known that there was another giant killed and named Goliath?

DEHUMANIZING HUMANISM

Insofar as it challenges traditional values about the meaning of life, justice, and God's activity in the world, Ecclesiastes is one of the most radical books in the

entire Bible. Both Jews and Christians debated its place in the canon, as is evident in this statement attributed to Rabbi Judah in the Talmud, "The Rabbis desired to hide the book of Ecclesiastes because its words are self-contradictory."38 The rabbi, however, says that it was included in the canon because the book bears references to the Torah in its beginning and ending.

Although often attributed to Solomon, Ecclesiastes was written by an author sometimes known as Qoheleth, a term variously translated as "the preacher" or "the teacher" (Ecclesiastes 1:1).39 The book meditates on the meaningless nature of human life. For Qoheleth, whether one lives righteously or wickedly, the reward is the same: death. There is no reward after death (see Ecclesiastes 9:1-5). Therefore, human beings should enjoy their own lives as much as possible. Translators have not lost time trying to minimize the radical thoughts of Ecclesiastes, which can sometimes sound like the manual of an ancient humanist or deist.

One case in point is Ecclesiastes 2:25, of which a good English rendition would be: "For who will eat and enjoy, except for myself." The author's idea is radical because he could be construed as saying that God is irrelevant in the happiness of human beings. For some, the author of Ecclesiastes expresses a very humanistic idea insofar as he thinks that one should pursue one's happiness for the sake of oneself, not for some god. This humanistic concept was sufficiently bothersome to prompt the following alternative translations:

> NAB: For who can eat or drink apart from him?
>
> NJB: for who would get anything to eat or drink, unless all this came from him?
>
> REB: For without God who can eat with enjoyment?

The REB suppresses the humanism even more assertively by introducing "God," which is definitely not in the Hebrew text.

SUGARCOATING JESUS

Christianity often markets itself as more inclusive and loving than the religion of the Old Testament and Judaism. However, this has required using mistranslations to hide or suppress some of the starker discontinuities between what Jesus taught and what current versions of Christianity want their audiences to think Jesus taught. One of the prime examples is Luke 14:25-26, which the NRSV translates rather accurately as follows:

> Now large crowds were traveling with him; and he turned and said to them, "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple."

According to this text, Jesus acts more like a cult leader who actively attempts to transfer allegiance from the believer's family to himself. Disciples must hate their parents. This, of course, contradicts the commandment to honor one's parents (Exodus 20:12).

Christian apologists have attempted to annul or lessen the negative connotations of Luke 14:26. The Good News Bible, famous for sugarcoating objectionable passages, expunges the word "hate," and translates the verse as follows: "Whoever comes to me cannot be my disciple unless he loves me more than he loves his father and his mother, his wife and his children, his brothers, and his sisters and himself as well."

The GNB translators apparently justify this rendition by assuming that a parallel saying in Matthew 10:37 constitutes the proper meaning of Luke 14:26. Briefly, Matthew 10:37 says: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." We may label this "the comparative interpretation," which can be summarized more schematically as follows: "Hate X = Love Y more than X."

The first problem with this comparative interpretation is that the Greek word for hate, pronounced miseo (pt6~(o), never means "to love Y more than X" in any biblical text. In fact, miseo is interpreted as the opposite of love everywhere it occurs in Greek biblical texts. Note these examples (NRSV):4°

> So Samson's wife wept before him, saying, "You hate me; you do not really love me."

(Judg. 14:16)

> Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

(Amos 5:15)

> No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

(Luke 16:13)

In every case, "hate X" means the absence of any love for X, the opposite of love, and/or even hostility toward X.41

Luke 16:13 is particularly important, as it shows the usage of the word by presumably the same author of Luke 14:26. Luke 16:13 says: "No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." The author clearly indicates that one cannot have both love and hate for the same person. Here, love and hate are not described in terms of degree, but as exclusive either/or phenomena.

The comparative interpretation of Luke 14:26 actually creates a number of logical and semantic problems. For example, if we accept the proposition that "hate X" actually means "love Y more than X," then we should note the odd reading generated by such an equation in Amos 5:15: "hate evil = love good more than evil." However, it is clear that the author of Amos 5:15 is exhorting listeners to not love evil at all.

The arbitrary nature of Christian apologetics in Luke 14:26 can also be gauged by an unwillingness to treat occurrences of "love" in the same manner. That is to say, few, if any, of the same interpreters that want to treat "hate" comparatively in Luke 14:26 will do so for "love." But we could just as well posit that "love X = hate Y more than X." Indeed, there is a great circularity at work in saying that Jesus cannot mean hate in Luke 14:26 because he preaches "love" elsewhere. But we can reverse this rationale and argue that Jesus probably

did not mean "love" literally elsewhere because he clearly meant "hate" in Luke 14:26.

There are also cogent reasons for not using Matthew 10:37 to establish the meaning of Luke 14:26. One reason is quite simple. One cannot assume that Luke's readers had read Matthew at the time Luke was written. At the time Luke was being written, the New Testament, as we know it, did not exist. It was not complete, and that probably applies to all four Gospels. Therefore, it is unlikely that the author of Luke would use a word such as "hate" and hope that someone would have read Matthew in order to explain what Luke meant. Rather, one would expect that Luke used words that the audience understood from the way those words were used in the language of the reader. The Greek word miseo does not vary and is not subject to as much flexibility as other words may be.

The Contemporary English Version (CEV) sanitizes Jesus' seeming endorsement of genital mutilation with this translation of Matthew 19:12:

> Some people are unable to marry because of birth defects or because of what someone has done to their bodies. Others stay single for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Anyone who can accept this teaching should do so.

Compare this translation to that of the older Revised Standard Version:

> For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.

In other words, the RSV conveys much more accurately the idea that people can make themselves eunuchs, which might literally involve castration, for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus does not seem to object, and, in fact, he can be interpreted to endorse the idea of self-mutilation. That this passage could be so understood is shown by the fact that Origen, the famous church father, is reported to have castrated himself in light of this verse.42

The rendition of "stay single" seems most disingenuous in light of how the CEV is portrayed by its advocates: "The CEV is not a paraphrase. It is an

accurate and faithful translation of the original manuscripts."43 Yet, commenting on the CEV's "stay single" translation, Stanley Porter, the New Testament scholar, remarked: "Is it possible, in light of the overtly evangelistic purpose of the CEV, that the New Testament has been toned down in some places so that it does not scare off those attracted to Christianity?"44

We also find more subtle attempts to portray Jesus as more inclusive than the Greek New Testament indicates. In the famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus doles out blessings (beatitudes) for various good virtues. According to the NRSV, one famous blessing reads: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).45 At first glance, it might appear that Jesus is generous, giving away the entire planet for the meek to live upon. However, "the earth," in the sense of our whole planet or even all the land known at the time of Jesus, is probably not what was meant.

The Greek term y~ (pronounced ge) is most likely a translation of the regular Hebrew term (pronounced 'aretz), which is often used to designate the land of Israel. Supplementary evidence comes from Psalm 37 (v. 11), which has a parallel blessing: "But the meek shall inherit the land" (NRSV).46 Earlier in that same Psalm (37:3), the promise is made, "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so you will live in the land" (NRSV). Since everyone is already assumed to live on the earth in the most general sense, then the clause "so you will live in the land" more likely refers to a more restricted space, namely Israel. The New American Bible, therefore, comes closest to the original sense with its translation of "the land" in Matthew 5:5.

ENGENDERING INCLUSIVITY

One current debate raging among evangelical Christians involves Today's New International Version, which is meant to update and supplement the conservative stalwart, The New International Version. By some reports, the NIV/TNIV enjoy the largest share of the Bible market. Among the most vocal opponents of the TNIV is the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, which published a statement denouncing the TNIV. Signatories included well-known American evangelicals such as Charles Colson, James Dobson, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson.47

Although Christians fighting Christian translations is not new, this round of

trouble began in 1997 when Susan Olasky, the wife of the prominent conservative Marvin Olasky, wrote a cover story in World Magazine about the plans for a gender-inclusive updating of the NIV.48 This raised such a furor among some conservative Protestants that the International Bible Society (IBS), which holds the copyrights to the TNIV, and Zondervan, the American publisher of the TNIV, scrambled to suppress criticism. James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, convened a meeting that resulted in the socalled Colorado Springs Guidelines, which generally rejected gender-neutral language. Representatives of the IBS signed the agreement in 1997, but withdrew from it in 1999. This withdrawal was seen as treason. By the time the New Testament was published in 2002, it was clear that the TNIV was thoroughly committed to a gender-inclusive approach. The complete TNIV Bible was published in 2005.

The TNIV admits that its updating is motivated, in part, by marketing concerns. As already noted, the version is explicitly aimed at the coveted eighteen-to thirty-four-year-old market. It prefers to call itself a "genderaccurate" version. In particular, the TNIV changes numerous references to male nouns and pronouns in the original languages to more gender-inclusive renderings (e.g., "brothers" becomes "brothers and sisters"). In actuality, some of the gender-neutral renderings of the TNIV are not as modern as some might suppose. For example, in one of the beatitudes found in Matthew 5:9, the most literal rendition of the Greek is "sons of God." The NRSV, REB, NAB, and NJB all have "children of God." Yet the King James Bible already had "children of God" in 1611.

It is also true that there are Greek masculine words that may be interpreted as gender neutral. For example, anthropos (Greek: avOp(omos; the origin of the term anthropology) can sometimes mean "person(s), human being(s)." But there are clear cases where the TNIV simply makes a guess as to the sort of gender equality God intended. Consider Hebrews 2:17, which explains why Jesus had to assume the role of a priest in order to be sacrificed:

> NIV: For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

> TNIV: For this reason he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high

priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

The TNIV's rendition minimizes the fact that priesthood was limited to males. Becoming like his brothers and sisters "in every way," if understood literally, might also render Jesus a hermaphrodite.

Similarly, consider Acts 20:30, in which the apostle Paul addresses the "elders of the church" (see Acts 20:17) in the city called Ephesus (located in what is now Turkey):

NIV: Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

TNIV: Even from your own number some will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

Unlike the case with some Greek words, which can be understood as gender neutral, the Greek word (avi p; pronounced aner) is specifically the one used to distinguish the male from the female. So the TNIV obscures any notion that the eldership in this church was a privilege assigned only to males.

Another case is found in 1 Timothy 2:12, which has been used to uphold the idea that only males can be church leaders.

NIV: I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

TNIV: I do not permit a woman [TNIV note: or wife] to teach or to assume authority over a man [TNIV note: or "over her husband"; or to "teach a man in a domineering way"; or to "teach or to exercise (or have) authority over a man]; she must be quiet.

Here the more androcentric and misogynist reading has been exchanged for a convoluted translation with five alternatives. Now a woman can potentially teach, as long as it is not in a "domineering way." All this leaves the last clause ("she must be quiet") unexplained, unless it means that she is allowed to use sign language.49

In any case, the TNIV betrays the fact that biblical concepts of gender are so unacceptable to modern readers that only mistranslation can rescue any notion of gender equality. In a statement about its translation principles, the Committee for Biblical Translation (CBT), the body responsible for the translation of the TNIV, admits as much:

> The Patriarchalism (like other social patterns) of the ancient cultures in which the Biblical books were composed is pervasively reflected in forms of expression that appear, in the modern context, to deny the common human dignity of all hearers and readers. For these forms alternative modes of expression can and may be used, though care must be taken not to distort the intent of the original text .51

Note that the translators themselves admit that they are not providing an equivalence, formal or dynamic, but rather "alternative modes of expression."

And, as the examples above show, the TNIV and other inclusive-language translations certainly distort the meaning of the original in many instances. The fact remains that biblical authors could have used "brothers and sisters" but did not. Biblical authors could have said "men and women" but did not.

All gender-inclusive translations, therefore, aim not to expose the original culture of ancient authors but to hide it and render it palatable to modern culture.

SANITIZING ANTI-JUDAISM

The Holocaust generated a lot of self-critical analysis on the part of many Christians, and rightly so. Some Christian scholars have acknowledged the anti-Judaism, while others have claimed that any anti-Judaism has been the result of misunderstanding crucial passages .51 But one of the methods used to atone for a long Christian history of anti-Judaism centers on hiding the anti-Jewish statements in the New Testament.52 We return to the most blatant proposal by Irvin J. Borowsky in Removing the AntiJudaism from the New Testament:

> The solution to erasing this hatred is for bible societies and religious publishers to produce two editions, one for the public similar to the Contemporary English Version which reduces significantly this anti-Judaic potential, and the other edition for scholars taken from the Greek

text.53

Orwellian double-speak could not be celebrated more fervently. The proposal is paternalistic because it assumes that readers need to be protected from their own Bible. Borowsky adds, "[T]he stakes are high. People have been murdered because of these words."54 Similar and no less satisfactory attempts to address anti-Judaism have also been outlined by Norman A. Beck, a Lutheran biblical theologian.55 Such efforts only expose the fact that scholars themselves know that "the Bible" is a violent document, which must be sanitized to keep it alive.

The TNIV has joined this whitewashing bandwagon, as is clear from Acts 13:50, where it has "Jewish leaders" instead of "Jews." Note the NIV's rendition: "The Jews incited the God-fearing women. They stirred persecution against Paul." Eugene Nida defended such a translation in an interview:

> The problem Jesus had was not with the Jews in general-the problem was in the Jewish leadership. I think that's perfectly legitimate because in the Gospels, when it says the Jews, it is not talking about Jews in general. It is usually talking about the Pharisees, but in some instances the Sadducees.56

It may be true that there are some instances where "Jews" means only the Jewish leadership, but Nida is exaggerating or plainly wrong in his general ization because we do find many instances where "the Jews" refers to more than just Jewish leaders or Pharisees. For example, it is absurd to say that the repeated description of Jesus as "King of the Jews" (Mark 15:18) refers only to Jesus' kingship over "Jewish leaders." In John 2:13, it is not likely that "the Passover of the Jews" means a feast restricted only to Jewish leaders.57

Consider also Mark 7:3: "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders." Here the author seems intent on ensuring that we understand that "and all the Jews" are not just the Pharisees or Jewish leaders. This verse is part of a much larger discourse filled with harsh epithets (for example, "hypocrites" in v. 6). Mark 7 and especially verses 6-13 are so objectionable that Norman A. Beck suggests that as "a minimum response, 7:6-13 should be removed from our pericope series, which we read in public worship."58

If we return to the book of Acts, we find repeated speeches not likely addressed to just Jewish leaders.59 For example, Acts 3:11 and 12 use the Greek word normally applied to a whole people (2aos). Acts 3:12 also addresses this same group with the phrase "Israelite men" ('AvBpes IGpae2Ita1) in a speech that accuses them of killing Christ (v. 15: "you killed the author of life").60 Acts 14:5 states, "When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to molest them and to stone them ..." (RSV). Here, qualifying "Jews" by adding "with their rulers" (TNIV has "with their leaders") must mean that "Jews" are not to be equated with just those leaders.

Thus, there is no reason to understand "Jews" any differently in Acts 13:50 than in Acts 14:5. The rendition "Jewish leaders" in Acts 13:50 hides the biblical author's view of "the Jews" as a collective entity. Viewing Jews as a collective entity responsible for anti-Christian actions has resulted in anti-Jewish violence repeatedly in Christian history. Collective punishment was a pervasive biblical idea (e.g., the Flood in Genesis 6-8, Exodus 20:5-6), and it is only special pleading that denies such collective thinking to early Christians.

And while many scholars endeavor to clear New Testament authors of the charge of anti-Judaism, most forget how hateful these New Testament authors were toward Gentiles as well. Note just a couple of passages:

> It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife. (1 Cor. 5:1)

> Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. (Ephesian 4:17)

Apparently, scholars are more bothered by anti-Judaism than by "antiGentilism." In any case, I know of no major biblical scholar who argues that we need to go beyond reinterpreting anti-Judaism, and that we need to repudiate the use of the Bible itself as any sort of authority for our behavior toward any group in the modern world.

SUMMARY

Jean Baudrillard, a keen observer of how appearances are manipulated, once

remarked that "Disneyland exists in order to hide that it is the `real country,' all of `real' America, that is Disneyland (a bit like prisons are there to hide that it is the social life in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, that is carcereal)."61 Similarly, each individual translation functions as a Disneyland, hiding the fact that all biblical translations are illusions constructed by translators.

According to the ethicist Sissela Bok, a lie is "an intentionally deceptive message in the form of a statement."62 Such a message may be oral or written. We may say that Bible translations lie when they misrepresent what is actually in an underlying text. Bible translations lie for many of the same reasons almost anyone lies. Pseudologues hide truth to promote their own interests. Commenting on students who ask why they are often not told of all of the violent and objectionable passages in the Bible, Michael Coogan responds, "In part, the answer is that they [students] could not be trusted to read the Bible: It is a dangerous, even subversive collection."63 This is why Bible translations do not lie in every instance. Translators distort scripture only where they think it might benefit them; they are more accurate or faithful with passages they deem to hold no meanings that might be considered objectionable.

Overall, translators know that the Bible is the product of cultures whose modes of life and thought were very different from ours. In some cases, the Bible's philosophy is so barbaric and violent that it defies explaining why anyone would consider it sacred at all.64 The difference between "formal equivalence" and "dynamic/functional equivalence" proves inconsequential because the function of both approaches is the same: to prop up the Bible's illusory relevance. Mistranslation is, in this sense, often the goal of all biblical translations.

NOTES

1. Philip C. Stine, Let the Words Be Written: The Lasting Influence of Eugene Nida (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), p. 182.

2. See ibid., p. 66.

3. Quoted in Leland Ryken, The Word of God in English: Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), p. 73.

4. A more popular version of this chapter was published in Hector Avalos, "Twisting Scripture: When Translators Distort the Bible," Free Inquiry 26, no. 2 (February/March 2006): 38-44.

5. George Steiner, After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 47.

6. Important works and resources in translation theory include Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler, eds., Translation and Power (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002); Mona Baker, ed., Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies (London: Routledge, 2005); Ernst-August Gutt, Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991); Mary Snell-Hornby, Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1988).

7. Jose Ortega y Gasset, Miseria y esplendor de la traduccidn (Stuttgart: Deutscher Tagebuch Verlag, 1976), p. 6: "ninguna de eras cocas se puede hacer, que son de suyo imposibles, que se quedan en mera pretension, vano proyecto, y ademan invalido."

8. Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, 8 vols. (N.p.: AP&A [1889]), 7:162.

9. Philip Mauro, "Life in the Word," in The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth, ed. R. A. Torrey *et al.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 2:169.

10. See Snell-Hornby, Translation Studies, p. 9.

11. My translation of the Latin text found in Snell-Hornby, Translation Studies, p. 9: Ego enim non solum fateor, sed libera voce profiteor me in interpretatione Graecorum absque scripturus sanctis, ubi et verborum ordo misterium est, non verbum e verbo sed sensum exprimere de sensu." Italics are Snell-Hornby's.

12. Maria Tymoczko, "How Distinct Are Formal and Dynamic Equivalence?" in The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary

Translation, ed. Theo Hermans (London: Croon Helm, 1985), p. 79.

13. Theo Hermans, "Introduction: Translation Studies and a New Paradigm," in The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation (London: Croon Helm, 1985), p. 11. For a work that challenges the idea that communication is meant to reveal the content of a speaker's utterances, see Christopher Gauker, Words without Meaning (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

14. Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "We Really Do Need another Bible Translation," Christianity Today 45, no. 13 (2001): 29; see also Stine, Let the Words Be Written, p. 7.

15. Van Leeuwen, "We Really Do Need another Bible Translation," p. 29.

16. Stine, Let the Words Be Written; for an earlier tribute, see Matthew Black and William A. Smalley, eds., On Language, Culture, and Religion: In Honor of Eugene A. Nida (The Hague: Mouton, 1974).

17. The preceding information was compiled mainly from his biography (Eugene Nida, Fascinated by Languages [Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003]) and the American Bible Society's official Web site, http://www.nidainstitute.org/vsItemDisplay.dsp&objectID=0920A817-28AA-4D6F -9B9F70012FE3A462&method=display (accessed September 7, 2006).

18. For these cautionary comments, see Christo H. J. Van der Merwe's review of Leland Ryken, The Word of God in English (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), in Review of Biblical Literature 1 (2004), available online at http://www.bookreviews .org/bookdetail.asp?TitleId=3149&CodePage=2312,3149.

19. Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, The Theory and Practice of Translation (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982), p. 200. Capitalized words follow Nida and Taber.

20. Snell-Hornby, Translation Studies, p. 19.

21. My translation of the German text in Karin Bornkamm and Gerhard

Ebeling, eds., Martin Luther: Ausgewahlte Schriften/Kirche, Gottesdienst, Schule (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1995), 5:147-48: Ebenso babe ich hier Romer 3, 28 Behr gut gewusst, dass im lateinischen and griechischen Text das wort `solum' nicht steht, and solches hatten mich die Papisten nich zu lehren brauchen.... Denn man muss nicht die Buchstaben in der lateinischen Sprache fragen, wie man deutsch reden solle, wie's these Esel tun, sondern man muss die Mutter im Hause, die Kinder auf der Gasse, den einfachen Mann auf dem Markt, danach fragen and denselben auf das Maul sehen, wie sie reden, and danach ubersetzen; da verstehen sie es dann and merken, dass man deutsch mit ihnen redet."

22. Nida and Taber, The Theory and Practice, p. 32.

23. See the official TNIV Web site, http://www.tniv.info/qanda.php (accessed September 7, 2006).

24. For a general introduction to Ugaritic studies, see Dennis Pardee, "Ugaritic Studies at the End of the 20th Century," BASOR 320 (2000): 49-86; Gordon D. Young, ed., Ugarit in Retrospect: 50 Years of Ugarit and Ugaritic (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981). For a more thorough technical survey, see W. G. E. Watson and N. Wyatt, eds., Handbook of Ugaritic Studies (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

25. See further, E. E. Elnes and P. D. Miller, "Elyon," in Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible, ed. Karen van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, 2nd rev. ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 293-99.

26. For the Aramaic text and translation, see Joseph Fitzmyer, The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire (Rome: Biblical Institutes Press, 1967), Text I, Face A, line 11: Fitzmyer transcribes the name as "Elyan," not "Elyon," but it is the same word.

27. See also Elnes and Miller, "Elyon," pp. 294-95.

28. For a discussion, see E. Theodore Mullen Jr., The Assembly of the Gods (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1980), pp. 202-205. For a brief exposition of the propolytheistic reading, see Emanuel Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress/Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2001), pp. 269-70.

Attempts to invalidate the polytheism in this passage are based on speculative solutions from evangelical scholars, including David Stevens, "Does Deuteronomy 32:8 Refer to `Sons of God' or `Sons of Israel?'" BS 154 (1997): 131-41; Michael S. Heiser, "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God," BS 158 (2001): 52-74. Heiser ("Deuteronomy 32:8," p. 74) goes so far as to admit that Deuteronomy 32:8 does refer to a multiplicity of divine beings, but he insists it is not "polytheism" because, among other things, "Yahweh is clearly depicted as the sole Deity credited with bringing all that exists into being. He was unassisted in his creative acts." Thus, Heiser simply redefines "monotheism" to mean apparently the belief in one supreme creator with infinite attributes. Other lesser "gods" could exist.

29. For the general techniques used by ancient Greek versions, see John A. Beck, Translators as Storytellers: A Study in Septuagint Translation Technique (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).

30. Robert Jastrow, God and the Astronomers (New York: Warner Books, 1978), p. 14.

31. Harry M. Orlinsky, "The Plain Meaning of Genesis 1:1-3," BA 46 (December 1983): 207-209.

32. Most historians do not view creatio ex nihilo as a pre-Christian development. See Gerhard May, Creatio ex nihilo: The Doctrine of `Creation out of Nothing,' in Early Christian Thought, trans. A. S. Worrell (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994).

33. For a recent treatment of bara', see W. Randall Garr, "God's Creation: R-12 in the Priestly Source," HTR 97, no. 1 (2004): 83-90.

34. Michael Coogan, "The Great Gulf between Scholars and the Pew," in Biblical Studies Alternatively: An Introductory Reader, ed. Susanne Scholz (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), p. 9.

35. Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1992), pp. 199-200.

36. Some editions of the KJV use italics to mark the insertion, but just as

often such an edition does not explain to readers what the italics mean. One example is the 1977 version published by the American Bible Society.

37. See further, Dominique Barthelemy, David W. Gooding, Johan Lust, and Emanuel Tov, eds., The Story of David and Goliath: Textual and Literary Criticism (Fribourg, Switzerland: Editions Universitaires/Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986).

38. Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 30b:

I>7nti r7:rrv non n57p 7~)ti nay Trnn ivpn.

All of our citations of the Babylonian Talmud are from Isidore Epstein, ed., Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud (London: Soncino Press, 1988-1994). See further, Martin A. Shields, The End of Wisdom: A Reappraisal of the Historical and Canonical Function of Ecclesiastes (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006).

39. For a recent scholarly commentary, see Choon-Leong Seow, Ecclesiastes (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

40. For Judges 14:16 and Amos 5:15, I am citing the Greek translation (the Septuagint) of the Hebrew Bible. For an edition, see Alfred Rahlfs, Septuaginta ... Editio minor (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979).

41. See also Joseph Fitzmyer, The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), p. 1063.

42. The story is found in Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, trans. J. E. L. Oulton (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 6.8.1-3. Eusebius attributes Origen's actions to an immature and youthful mind (Opevos μev atisXovs Kai veavtKTs), but he also says another Christian named Demetrius approved of Origen's sincere act. On castration in early Christianity, see Mathew Kuefler, The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

43. See http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/?action=getVersionInfo&vid=46 (accessed August 31, 2006).

44. Stanley Porter, "The Contemporary English Version," in Translating the Bible: Problems and Prospects, ed. Stanley Porter and Richard Hess (London: T&T Clark, 1999), p. 39.

45. See further, Hans D. Betz, Essays on the Sermon on the Mount, trans. L. L. Welborn (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), especially pp. 17-36; Roland H. Worth, The Sermon on the Mount: Its Old Testament Roots (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997).

46. Here the Greek also has yf, the same word as in Matthew 5:5.

47. See www.cbmw.org/resources/tniv/leaders.php (accessed September 15, 2006).

48. Susan Olasky, "Femme Fatale: The Feminist Seduction of the Evangelical Church: The New International Version of the Bible-the Best-Selling English Version in the World-Is Quietly Going `Gender-neutral,'" World Magazine 2, no. 2 (March 29, 1997), available online at http://worldmag.com/displayarticles/229. For an example of a previous attack by Christian conservatives on a Bible version, in this case the Revised Standard Version, see Peter J. Thuesen, In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles over Translating the Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

49. For an evangelical Christian attempt to deny that 1 Timothy 2:11-15 prohibits women from teaching, see Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Krueger, I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992).

50. See D. A. Carson, The Inclusive Language Debate: A Plea for Realism (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), p. 41.

51. Some of the classic works on this issue include Charlotte Klein, AntiJudaism in Christian Theology, trans. Edward Quinn (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); John G. Gager, The Origins ofAnti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Paganism and Christian Antiquity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Rosemary R. Ruether, Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism (New York: Seabury, 1979).

52. Howard Clark Kee and Irvin J. Borowsky, Removing the AntiJudaism from the New Testament (Philadelphia: American Interfaith Institute/World Alliance, 2000); Norman A. Beck, Mature Christianity in the 21st Century: The Recognition and Repudiation of the Anti-Jewish Polemic in the New Testament (New York: Crossroad, 1994); Tikva Frymer-Kensky, David Novak, Peter Ochs, David Fox Sandmel, and Michael A. Signer, Christianity in Jewish Terms (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2000).

53. Kee and Borowsky, Removing the AntiJudaism, p. 18.

54. Ibid., p. 20.

55. Beck, Mature Christianity in the 21st Century, p. 323, grants that "the defamatory anti-Jewish polemic of the New Testament must be repudiated," but Beck's proposals are more akin to keeping the parts of Mein Kampf that are not objectionable.

56. David Neff, "Meaning-full Translations," Christianity Today, October 7, 2002, p. 48, available online at http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/011/2.46.html (accessed September 21, 2006).

57. For an extensive earlier but still excellent review of the problem of the term "Jews" in the Gospel of John, see Urban C. von Wahlde, "The Johannine `Jews': A Critical Survey," NTS 28 (1982): 33-60.

58. Norman A. Beck, Mature Christianity, p. 152.

59. For a more accurate assessment of anti-Judaism in Acts, see Lawrence M. Wills, "The Depiction of the Jews in Acts," JBL 110 (1991): 631-54.

60. Greek: tiov 6e apxrjyov 't~s cwijs aitsx'tsiva'Cs; John J. Pilch, "No Jews or Christians in the Bible," Explorations 12, no. 2 (1998): 3, proposes that "Israelites is the term most appropriate for the period of the first Temple (950 BCE to 586 BCE)." Yet the use of "Israelites" in this speech in Acts shows that Pilch is imposing his own terminology rather than reflecting how biblical authors themselves were using it.

61. Jean Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation, trans. Sheira Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 12. French text in

Simulacres et simulation (Paris: Editions Galilee, 1981), pp. 25-26: "Disneyland est la pour cacher que c'est le pays `reel,' toute l'Amerique `reele' qui est Disneyland (un pen comme les prisons sont la pour cacher que c'est le social tout entier, dans son omnipresence banale, quie est carceral)."

62. Sissela Bok, Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), p. 15.

63. Coogan, "The Great Gulf between Scholars and the Pew," p. 8.

64. For the violent aspect of the Bible, see Hector Avalos, Fighting Words: The Origins of Religious Violence (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2005).

Chapter 2

TEXTUAL CRITICISM: "THE ORIGINAL SIN"

extual criticism is the scholarly discipline that seeks to reconstruct the most original text possible for any particular written work.' Such a discipline, therefore, is not restricted to the Bible. Most of the famous works of antiquity were not preserved intact. They are found in partial manuscripts, or transmitted in fragments through quotations in other works. Unlike most works of antiquity, however, the textual criticism of the Bible carries crucial theological and moral consequences for those who believe they must have an accurate record of God's word to guide the conduct of their lives.' And today, most self-described evangelical Christians deem that textual criticism has proven the reliability of their scriptures.

Yet in the past few decades, there have been some prominent textual critics who have worried whether this field will survive. Consider the depressing assessment uttered in 1977 by Eldon J. Epp, a prominent New Testament textual critic and the 2003 president of the Society of Biblical Literature:

> The reasons for this recent and rapid erosion of the field of NT textual criticism are elusive. Most of it has taken place in a little more than a decade. Whether the disappearance of opportunities for graduate study in the field is a cause or a symptom of the erosion is not clear, though certainly the discipline would seem to have no bright future in America and little hope of survival here without opportunities.3

Today, Epp is more optimistic, although he explicitly admits that his current optimism contradicts his past evaluations.' Among other things, Epp believes that there has been progress in liberating textual criticism from fixation on an "original text."5

Epp also based his more recent optimism on hopeful signs enumerated by Larry W. Hurtado, a textual critic now at Edinburgh University.' But some of those signs are not as hopeful as they seemed when they were first published. Consider that Hurtado heralded the 1996 launch of a new journal, called TC:

Textual Criticism, as a good omen, even if he admitted it was too early to tell.' An examination of the contents of the journal reveals that for 2004-2005 the journal lists "no articles yet available," and other years (1997, 1999) register only one article. This is hardly a sign of vitality for a field.

Accordingly, this chapter demonstrates that (1) the findings of textual critics devastate any claim that the Bible has been transmitted faithfully from any original text; (2) the whole idea of an original text is an illusion; (3) academic textual critics are still largely religionist in their goals; and (4) there is no longer any strong rationale for why textual criticism, as a discipline, should matter to those outside communities of faith, or even to communities of faith themselves. In short, the subdiscipline of textual criticism has helped to put itself and biblical studies out of business. All that is left is for textual critics to come to terms with what they have done to themselves.

THEOLOGICAL ORIGINS

The quest for establishing the reliability of God's word has historically been at the heart of biblical textual criticism. Concern about maintaining a reliable record of God's word can already be detected in the Bible itself. Exodus 34:1 indicates that Yahweh himself is the author of at least some parts of the Bible: "The LORD said to Moses, `Cut two tables of stone like the first; and I will write upon the tables the words that were on the first tables, which you broke."' Deuteronomy 4:1-2 has the following instructions:

> And now, 0 Israel, give heed to the statutes and the ordinances which I teach you, and do them; that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, gives you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it; that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

If one does not add or subtract a word from the text, then the text remains immutable. Yet some biblical authors were aware that scribes could alter biblical texts for improper motives. In Jeremiah 8:8, we find this fascinating complaint: "How can you say, `We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us'? But, behold, the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie."

A copy is only as good as the copyist, as is acknowledged in the Jewish Talmud, where Rabbi Ishmael issued the following warning to a young scribe: "My son, be careful, because thy work is the work of Heaven; if thou omittest a single letter or addest a single letter, thou doest as a consequence destroy the whole world."8 Of course, this anecdote recalls the words attributed to Jesus himself in Matthew 5:18: "For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished."

The early Christian period saw a number of Jewish and Christian scholars who were very worried about the transmission of reliable biblical texts. One of the most monumental feats of scholarship in the ancient world was executed by Origen (ca. 185-254) when he completed his famous Hexapla.9 The Hexapla was a response to problems posed by the variant Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible.

The Hexapla featured six parallel columns, including a column for the Hebrew text and for various Greek versions of the Hebrew Bible. Origen adapted the notations of a Greek textual critic named Aristarchus to signal additions and subtractions from what Origen deemed to be the original text. However, Origen also included, in his fifth column, his own reconstruction of the text, which has come to be known as the Hexaplaric recension. Ironically, it often proved to obscure the original text of the Septuagint.

Today, textual critics have much more material than even Origen had available. Powerful computers have made the task of sorting through variations easier, though there are still major problems with determining even how many variant readings there are. Yet it is those very advances and new discoveries that have made the whole goal of textual criticism-if that means finding the original text or providing believers with some intact record of God's word-all but obsolete. Textual criticism, in fact, has helped destroy any notion that there was ever a stable entity called "the Bible." We will demonstrate this argument by a closer examination of the advances in textual criticism with regard to both the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament.

THE ILLUSION OF “THE ORIGINAL”

From the beginning the quest for the "original" text has functioned as a sort of Holy Grail for textual critics. Although many Jews and Christians were aware of

changes to their scriptures, they thought it was always possible to access the original text. For conservative Christians, having the certainty of the original text is indispensable. As Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, two self-described fundamentalists, phrase it, "So, for all practical purposes, the Bible in our hand, imperfect though the manuscripts are, conveys the complete truth of the original Word of God."[10] For hundreds of years, major academic textual critics, not just "fundamentalists," supported this illusion even in light of new discoveries.

In the case of the New Testament, various textual critics and editors of the Greek New Testament are explicit in announcing that it is the original text that they seek or even allege to have found. Thus, the famous Westcott-Hort edition of the Greek New Testament, which we will discuss more fully below, proclaims itself as "an attempt to present exactly the original words of the New Testament, so far as they can now be determined from surviving documents.""

Sir Frederic Kenyon, who was the main editor of the Chester Beatty papyri, a collection of some of the earliest manuscripts of the New Testament, strongly believed that these early manuscripts were tantamount to the originals. Kenyon, then the director and principal librarian of the British Museum, confidently asserted:

> The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.[12]

Statements such as this from so high an authority as Kenyon were repeated by Christian apologists, and helped to maintain the myth of the accessibility of "the original."

More recently, the powerful textual critics Kurt and Barbara Aland acknowledged the multiplicity of materials that represent the text of the New Testament. Yet they claim that "we can be certain that among these there is still a group of witnesses which preserves the original form of the text."[13] This notion of the "original text" for the New Testament has been ably and incisively critiqued by Eldon J. Epp, though we will argue that he still does not see the full

implications of this critique.14

In the case of the Hebrew Bible, Paul Anton de Lagarde is credited with being the foremost modern champion of the existence of an original text, sometimes also called an Urtext following German usage. Usually contraposed to de Lagarde is Paul Kahle, another German scholar. Kahle rejected the whole idea that we could reconstruct an original, and instead he announced that "[t]he task set for scholarship here is not to reconstruct or even attempt a hypothetical reconstruction of the original text of the version, but to assemble and examine with the greatest care all the fragments and traces of the earliest forms of the Greek Bible we can discover."15 Emanuel Tov, the chief editor of the DSS, summarizes their differences: "According to Kahle, these texts thus developed from a textual plurality into a unity, whereas de Lagarde had maintained that the unity preceded the textual plurality."16

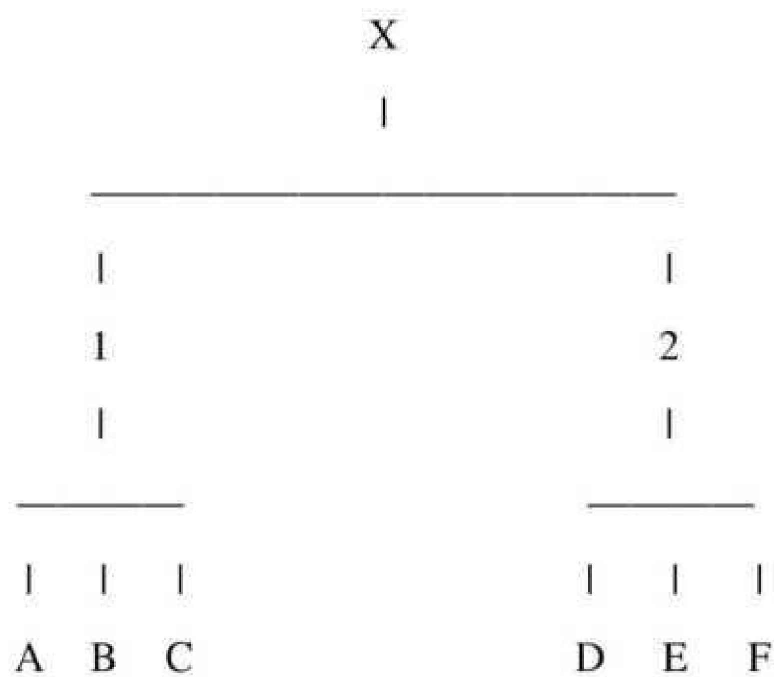
WHY WE CAN'T RECOVER "THE ORIGINAL"

In order to understand why it is problematic to ever reconstruct an "original" text, we need to begin with some basic terms. The original manuscript of any writing is called an "autograph." That is to say, this would be the very first text that we, if we were present, could see the author himself/herself writing. An "antigraph" is the presumed written source behind any copy. Thus, if a reader copied this very page of the present book, this page would be the antigraph for that copy.

The most important fact to consider in trying to reconstruct an "original" is that we do not possess the autograph of any biblical writing, and this much is admitted by the staunchest religionist apologists. A second fact is that an antigraph may or may not be the same as the autograph. But more importantly, these facts mean that we usually cannot reconstruct an ancient autograph that is no longer available, nor could we recognize the autograph even if we found it.

We can illustrate the problem quite simply. Let's suppose that one has six surviving manuscripts labeled A, B, C, D, E, and F, which are related to a hypothetical original X, as follows:

Original Autograph of a Book?



Here, X could be the autograph, the text from an original author's own hand, and from which all subsequent copies derive. X would be the antigraph for copies 1 and 2. Copy 1 would be the antigraph for A, B, and C; copy 2 would be the antigraph of copies D, E, and F.

Perhaps, we might plausibly conclude that A, B, and C derive from copy 1 because their wording is very similar. For example, only those three share some hypothetical expression ("seal of God") as opposed to D, E, and F, which have "lamb of God" at the equivalent slot in the text. Thus, we can reasonably conclude that A, B, and C must have a common antigraph with the words "seal of God," which we can designate as copy 1. Likewise, we might plausibly conclude that copies D, E, and F must go back to the antigraph called copy 2, which has the wording "lamb of God."

However, since copy 1 and copy 2 are still different in at least one reading ("lamb of God" versus "seal of God"), then it would be difficult to decide whether copy 1 or copy 2 is "the original." In fact their variants tell us that they must have been copied from a still-earlier antigraph from which copy 1 and copy 2 diverged. Even if one reconstructed X as the source behind copy 1 and copy 2,

it does not show that the X manuscript is the autograph. Why? Because X itself could be a copy of another antigraph that is also not the most original. How would we know?

The problem of identifying the original, even if we found it, is exacerbated if an oral tradition lies behind the first written version. In my own classes, I sometimes illustrate this problem by telling students that they are actually producing manuscripts of an oral presentation, namely my lecture. However, if they were to compare their resulting manuscripts, they probably would not be exactly the same. Some would not bother to write things that they believe they can remember without writing. Others would emphasize what they think is important. Others may not correctly hear what I had said. Thus, variant texts are produced ab initio, from the very beginning of their writing the text of my lecture."

Some might object that such a case is not a good analogy because scribes are there to reproduce the text as exactly as possible, and so are unlike students taking selective notes. As we shall show, the fact is that the first presumed scribes of any historical report may have been even less assiduous in their tasks, and any sort of professional copying standards can only be detected in relatively later centuries for biblical texts.

But for the sake of argument, let's now suppose that there is a tape recorder that has captured perfectly every word, and that a perfect transcript is made from that tape. Would that transcript constitute a perfect copy of the original "text," if that means my oral lecture? The answer is still no. We can prove that the transcript is a perfect copy of my lecture, but my oral lecture itself can be a copy of some earlier written version of the lecture that I produced in my office. And so, which lecture is the original-the one I gave in class and recorded, or the one I wrote in my office but perhaps did not reproduce as well in oral performance?

In the case of Jesus, the difficulty is magnified by the fact that any "original" sermons and discourses of Jesus are actually oral compositions. But not only are Jesus' sermons originally oral compositions, they may also have been in Galilean Aramaic, the presumed language of Jesus. So even if we were to find the original Greek texts behind all the Greek manuscripts we now have, we would end up only finding a translation of Jesus' words. And Greek translations, by definition, cannot be the "original" text of anything Jesus said in Aramaic. Furthermore, as

we have already seen, even the author of Mark has made additions in Greek to the Aramaic words reportedly spoken by Jesus in Mark 5:41 (see chapter 1).

All of this is why an appeal by some evangelicals to an inerrant original is nonsensical. Norman Geisler tells readers that "[w]hen critics do come upon a genuine mistake in a manuscript, they make another fatal error-they assume it was in the original inspired text of scripture."18 Indeed, having lost the battle to show that the manuscripts are consistent, Christian apologists have retreated into the comfort of asserting that only the "original" text is inspired, not necessarily the copies. But this is an unverifiable claim, as we do not possess the original manuscripts of anything. Moreover, all the major variants dismantle the idea that God sought to preserve his word. After all, what use is an inerrant original if we can't even read it or recognize it?

Of course, not every believer has been convinced that we should invest our faith in the actual copies, as the word of God should transcend material texts. By the seventeenth century, some had given up on finding any original. Samuel Fisher (1605-1665), a Quaker biblical scholar, concluded that "all the Copies of the Original that are in the World, and Translations too, come utterly to moulder, perish, and passe away, as the Originals themselves have long since done. Truth is the same that it was before any Letter or outward Text of it was."19 For Fisher, this resulted in his beliefs being based entirely on faith, but at least he was honest.

In any case, the "original text" proves to be a mirage unless we have access to the entire transmission process from inception to current copy. And such access is something we don't have, and probably never will have in the case of the Bible. With those basic principles in mind, we can now turn to both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament to show in greater detail how textual criticism reveals itself to be a theological enterprise that has unwittingly put itself out of business.

THE MASORETIC TEXT

Most modern Bibles use what is called the Masoretic Text when they translate the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. Since all modern Bibles depend on the Masoretic Text, it is very important to know the basic background of this family of texts. The Masoretes, as the scribes that produced the Masoretic Text are

denominated, were active around 780-930 CE near the Sea of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee) in what is now Northern Israel.20 The Masoretes were mainly responsible for adding vocalizations and accents to a Hebrew text that consisted mainly of consonants. That "preMasoretic text," consisting of consonants, was regarded as authoritative from about the second century.

As Emanuel Tov, the chief editor of the DSS, notes "[A]s a rule the term Masoretic Text is limited to a mere segment of the representatives of the textual tradition ... namely, that textual tradition which was given its final form by Aaron Ben Asher of the Tiberian group of the Masoretes."21 Aaron Ben Asher, who lived in the tenth century, and his family are credited with adding the vocalizations that became standard. Although there is a high degree of standardization produced by the Ben Asher family, not all manuscripts were perfectly consistent with each other. Moreover, other Masoretic traditions, such as the one associated with a contemporary scribe named Ben Naphthali, have some differences that can be crucial for interpretation, even if the instances might be rare.

The Masoretic Text, by virtue of its additions to the consonantal text, has itself produced readings that may not have existed in the earlier texts. Overall, there is no objective reason to privilege many of its vocalizations over any other we could propose ourselves. Alfred Loader, for instance, offers the example of Song of Songs 1:5, which reads:

> I am very dark, but comely, O daughters of Jerusalem,
> like the tents of Kedar,
> like the curtains of Solomon.

The consonants of the Hebrew word translated as "Solomon" can actually be vocalized in another way that is no less arbitrary. One alternative is to vocalize it as "Shalmah," a place name or tribal name, which would yield a more symmetrical poetic sense insofar as both similes would end with a place name (like the tents of Kedar/like the curtains of Shalmah).

This suggestion has been made by many prominent scholars, ranging from Julius Wellhausen to Marvin Pope." The decision to vocalize 7nhw as "Solomon" could be seen as a Masoretic attempt to connect the book with Solomon rather than a conclusion demanded by the consonantal text. So if the

Masoretes are responsible for a vocalization that was not original, they have created another word by virtue of that "Solomon" vocalization.

So why use the Masoretic Text? When translators choose a manuscript for translation of the Bible, they do not necessarily choose the best or earliest. In the case of the Ben Asher family of texts, however, choosing the earliest complete manuscript is a crucial factor. The earliest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible is called the Leningrad Codex, which dates to about 1008 CE. As Emanuel Tov observes, "Codex L[eningradensis] comprises the single most complete source of all the Bible books, which is closest to the Ben Asher tradition, and therefore has been made the base of two editions: BH/BHS."23 BH and BHS refer to the current authoritative printed editions The Biblia Hebraica and Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. The Leningrad Codex is so named because it is located today in what was formerly Leningrad (now again known as St. Petersburg), Russia, even though its journey there is still somewhat a mystery. It was part of a collection apparently brought there by Abraham Firkovich (Firkowitsch), a noted forger, who was also a member of the Karaite Jewish sect, which is analogous to Protestantism in claiming to adhere only to the Bible (rather than nonbiblical tradition and authorities) to conduct their lives. Despite Firkovich's forgeries, most scholars regard the Leningrad Codex as a genuine manuscript.24 In any case, the Leningrad Codex dates to around three thousand years later than some of the earliest patriarchal stories it relates (e.g., Abraham is dated by traditionalists to around 1950 BCE).

Yet the Leningrad Codex is an object of such great admiration that enormous labor was exerted to publish a sumptuous edition, called Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia, by the renowned scholar Aron Dotan.25 While the scholarly utility of this edition is undeniable, the publisher also wants readers to know that "it was originally commissioned in Israel to follow the necessary adaptations that qualify it for Jewish liturgical use, such as divisions into weekly portions and their subdivisions for synagogue reading."26 In short, modern textual criticism is still acting as the handmaiden of religion.

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

The year 1947 is usually marked as the most important year in the history of textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, which Christians call the Old Testament. To be more precise, it is in that year that the first set of scrolls, all derived from

what would be identified as Cave 1 near the Dead Sea, were recognized as ancient Hebrew manuscripts. These scrolls were of great significance because we now had Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible some one thousand years older than the Masoretic Text.

The story of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) has now been retold many times, but Tov summarizes it well: "Between 1947 and 1956 fragments of more than 200 biblical scrolls were found in the eleven caves of Qumran."27 The scrolls were reportedly first discovered in 1946 by Bedouins in caves near the ruins called Qumran, near the northwest corner of the Dead Sea, but they were not recognized as truly significant until 1947, which is when the "discovery" date is often fixed. Fragments of every book represented in the Protestant Bible were found, with the possible exception of Esther. The earliest is dated no earlier than the middle of the third century BCE. Such dates, first established on the basis of paleography, have been confirmed by radiocarbon dating.28

More importantly, there were also scores of nonbiblical texts that became known for the first time. These included works such as The Manual of Discipline and The Damascus Document. Fragments of books known and quoted in the Bible also were found, perhaps the most interesting of which is the book of Enoch. The implication of these additional texts is that there were probably more books regarded as "sacred" than there are now in most "Bibles," a point to which we shall return.

Yet fundamentalists quickly seized on the fact that at least two of the DSS from Cave 1 were of one biblical book, Isaiah. When those scrolls of Isaiah began to be compared with the Masoretic Text, there was great excitement, especially among Christian apologists. In particular, such apologists touted the great consistency between the text of Isaiah in the DSS and the Masoretic Text. Gleason Archer, a self-described fundamentalist who had trained at Harvard, boasted:

> Even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered at Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea in 1947 were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscript previously known (A.D. 980) they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.29

In the most recent edition of his notoriously inaccurate handbook of apologetics, Josh McDowell repeats Archer's claim.30

What Archer and McDowell usually don't tell readers is that also found were many other texts, called "non-aligned texts," which disagreed with the Masoretic Text. Emanuel Tov describes these non-aligned texts as "texts that are not exclusively close to one of the other groups."31 One example is a scroll of Leviticus (11QpaleoLeva) that contains too many disagreements with the Masoretic Text to be declared part of the Masoretic family (or preMasoretic family).32

And it did not take long for these scholars to learn that the consistency between the Isaiah Scrolls and the Masoretic Text was not the norm in many other cases. F. M. Cross, one of the most important scholars of this century, and an original member of the DSS team, says:

> In the old versions, especially in the Old Greek version (which was written beginning in the third century B.C., and is commonly called the Septuagint) there are thousands of variants, many minor, but also many major.33

Indeed, F. M. Cross discovered that the copies of the Old Testament in the DSS often disagreed with those of Masoretes. We already knew that the Greek translations, called the Septuagint, of the Hebrew Bible, also disagreed often with the Masoretic Text. But in many cases of such disagreements with the Masoretic Text, the DSS agreed with the Greek translation. The fact that the DSS agreed often with the Greek versions against the Masoretic Text was a monumental discovery.

Prior to the discovery of the DSS many scholars argued that the Greek version was inaccurate when it disagreed with the Hebrew copies made by the Masoretes. Indeed, it could easily be argued that differences between the Masoretic Text and the Greek versions were due to mistranslation into Greek. However, the DSS showed that the Greek version often faithfully translated the Hebrew texts and that the Greek version was therefore not necessarily inaccurate when it disagreed with the Masoretic copies. The DSS showed that the differences in the Bible were very ancient, and that the Masoretic Text may not always have the most original or best readings.

Moreover, the text of many biblical books was probably unstable and very changeable during their earliest history.34 For example, we now know that the Greek version of Jeremiah, which is one-sixth shorter than what is found in modern Bibles, actually does faithfully reflect another Hebrew edition found in the DSS.35 So again, it was not a case of the Greek version shortening some original Hebrew version. Rather, the DSS demonstrate that there was a Hebrew edition of Jeremiah that was shorter than what is reflected in the Masoretic Text and in most modern Bibles.

Likewise, we now know that there are other important places where the Masoretic Text probably has more material than may have existed in any original. For example, in the famous story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 16-17, the Septuagint (Greek) version lacks some 45 percent of the words found in the Masoretic version. In particular, verses 12-31, 41, 48b, 50, and 55-58 of chapter 17 are not in the Septuagint. And it is verses 12-31 and 55-58 that contain some of the favorite parts of the story (e.g., Goliath's repeated return to taunt the Israelites; Saul wanting to know who the young hero is).

It is true that we do not have portions of this story in the DSS. However, the confirmation of many of the Septuagint's readings in the DSS means that we cannot automatically presume any longer that that the Septuagint omitted the passage. As in many other cases confirmed by the DSS, the Septuagint may have been faithfully translating a version different from the one found in the Masoretic Text. Moreover, the version in the Septuagint makes better sense without the intrusive story of the Masoretic Text. Thus, in the Masoretic Text version, Saul does not know who David is in 1 Samuel 17:58, even though Saul indicates thorough familiarity with David, his servant, in 1 Samuel 16:18-23.

Because of such variations in versions, Frank Moore Cross further developed William F. Albright's idea that there were at least three families of Hebrew texts already extant by the time the Christian era began.36 These families were categorized according to the presumed locality where they had had their primary development, and so Albright and Cross's theory became known as the "local" theory of texts, which has its counterpart in New Testament textual criticism. For Cross, the three main localities were Palestine, Egypt, and Babylonia. Egypt is where the text behind the Greek Septuagint developed. Babylonia is where the text that resulted in the Masoretic Text developed.

However, the theory of local texts now seems to be falling apart. First, there are just too many texts. Second, there are plenty that are "non-aligned" with any of the three main ones Cross identified. Thus, Tov observes:

> As an alternative to the generally accepted theory of a tripartite division of the textual witnesses, it was suggested by Tov that the three above mentioned textual witnesses constitute only three of a larger number of texts. This suggestion thus follows an assumption of a multiplicity of texts rather than a tripartite division.37

In short, the DSS reveal that there was no such thing as "the Bible" (or "the Old Testament") in pre-Christian times, if that meant a single unified and unchanging text.

IS THERE A FINAL FORM OF A TEXT?

Fundamentalists, such as Gleason Archer or Josh McDowell, and biblical scholars in more "liberal" and respected institutions are not very different when it comes to the value of the original. Academic scholars of both conservative and liberal persuasions are united by a bibliolatrous orientation that is manifested in a persistent effort to privilege the biblical text, even if in different degrees. In the case of more liberal scholars, this is manifested by the argument that the "final" or "canonical" form of the text is authoritative, even if the evolution of previous stages is recognized.

Indeed, the existence of families of texts, which exhibit substantial differences from each other, prompted many troublesome questions for believers. First and foremost, those who believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God now were challenged to explain why their family of texts (e.g., the Masoretic Text) is the inspired one. For example, should the short version of Jeremiah be regarded as the inspired one? Should the additions reflected in the Masoretic Text be regarded as an adulteration that cannot be regarded as the word of God?

Of course, many of the fundamentalists resorted to the argument that God had preserved what he thought was the best. Such fundamentalists may not like Darwinian concepts, but they did not mind using the survival of the fittest as an explanation in this case. And though such explicitly theological arguments could

be expected among believers, one might think that academics were more sophisticated. In fact, the "inspiration" argument has not disappeared; rather, it has been replaced and obscured by the notion that there is a "final" form of a text that should be regarded as authoritative, as in the case of the advertising for Dotan's edition of the Leningrad Codex.

Such thinking has contaminated even scholars in our best and most elite "secularized" universities. Given the problems posed by the diversity exposed by textual criticism (and higher criticism), some biblical scholars have espoused the so-called canonical approach to scripture, in which the history of the text is subordinate to its completed "final" form. The late Yale professor Brevard Childs, perhaps the foremost champion of this approach, said, "The significance of the final form of the biblical text is that it alone bears witness to the full history of revelation."38

But the religionist underpinnings were admitted by Childs himself when he said "[T]o work with the final stage of a text is not to lose the historical dimension, but it is to make a critical, theological judgment regarding the process."39 As many had already observed, this approach was meant to brush aside the thorny issues posed by contradictions and the splicing of the biblical text that had been performed by historical-critical methods. In any case, for Childs and others, the "final" form of the text in the Hebrew Bible really meant the Masoretic Text.

The privileging of the Masoretic Text is somewhat of an embarrassment to those self-described Christian fundamentalists who otherwise extoll it. It has long been known that Jesus and other New Testament authors did not quote the Masoretic Text or even the preMasoretic text of the Hebrew Bible. Instead, Jesus and New Testament authors routinely quote the Greek translation, even when it disagrees with the Masoretic Text.

For example, in Matthew 5:31, the Greek reads: "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, I give her a certificate of divorce.'" (... Sotiw av~j dmo6tid ov). Jesus, in fact, is quoting the Greek version of Deuteronomy 24:1, which also has "I give her...." However, the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy 24:1 actually says (RSV): "When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce."

Therefore, Jesus' quote in Matthew 5:31 changes the subject of the verb completely, and could then refer to either Moses, who gives the certificate of divorce, or to Yahweh himself. Moses or Yahweh are the speakers in Deuteronomy (see Deuteronomy 1:1, 5:1, 8:1), and there is no indication of a quote from the man who is doing the divorcing (e.g., "He shall say ..."). The Hebrew makes more sense in Deuteronomy 24:1. Self-described fundamentalists fail to explain why Jesus, who is supposed to be God himself, cannot seem to quote his own words perfectly.40

Alfred Loader has acutely critiqued the whole idea that the Masoretic Text should be seen as a final text.41 One obvious problem is that it is arbitrary to declare any particular form of a text a "final" form. In fact, such a pronouncement is similar to the Muslim pronouncement that Muhammad is God's final prophet or that the Qur'an is the final revelation. How can Childs determine that God really wanted the Masoretic version rather than the shorter Hebrew version of Jeremiah? Why doesn't Childs regard the longer Masoretic version as corrupted by additions? Of course, theological judgments about a "final" text are no more verifiable than the Muslim claims. Besides, as Loader observes, "there is no such thing as `the final text,' when one considers all the contributions that readers make, not just scribes."42

And the work of Tov himself illustrates the rapid disintegration of the notion of the "original" or "final" text of the Hebrew Bible. In his first edition of his now standard manual, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (1992), Tov maintained, even with confusing reservations, that a recoverable Urtext (German for "original text") exists:

> At the end of the process of the composition of a biblical book stood one textual entity (a single copy or tradition), which was considered finished at the literary level even if only by a limited group of people, and which at the same time stood at the beginning of a process of copying and textual transmission. ... This entity thus forms the "original" text for textual criticism, though in a restricted formulation, since it was preceded by oral and written stages.43

But in describing the changes made in the revised edition of this manual, he admits that "[t]he present formulation of the Urtext, for example, is more refined."44 And how are his current notions of the Urtext more refined? First, he

now believes that the end of the composition process resulted in "a text which was considered authoritative."45 Then, he clarifies further as follows:

> In the first edition of this monograph (1992) such textual evidence, which is mainly from [the Septuagint] (such as the short text of Jeremiah), was not taken into consideration in the reconstruction of the original text, and was presented as (a) layer(s) of literary growth preceding the final composition, in other words, as mere drafts. Such thinking, however, attaches too much importance to the canonical status of [the Masoretic Text], disregarding the significance of other textual traditions which at the same time must have been as authoritative as [the Masoretic Text] was at a later stage.46

Yet, Tov cannot seem to surrender totally the idea of the original. And so comes another confusing reservation,

> Phrased differently, while the definition of the original text in the first edition of this monograph is still considered valid, it is now expanded by considering the literary evidence discovered in the [Septuagint] and some Qumran texts more positively.47

Indeed, Tov has now moved to the recognition of "consecutive `original' editions in some biblical books."48 Clearly, even for such a formidable scholar as Tov, the idea of the "original" can only be maintained at the price of selfcontradiction and arbitrary privileging of some texts (or their literary stages) over others.

RELIGIONISM AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Emanuel Tov and Aron Dotan illustrate how religionism still plays a subtle role in the study of the DSS. But more scandalous manifestations of religionism also exist. Lawrence Schiffman summarizes the situation from a Jewish perspective when he explains the purpose of his book Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls:

> This book aims to correct a fundamental misreading of the Dead Sea Scrolls. For some forty years, the scholars publishing and interpreting the scrolls have focused almost single-mindedly on the scrolls' significance for our understanding of early Christianity. This is the first book ever

written to explain their significance in understanding the history of Judaism.49

First, note that it is not until 1994 that we have a book that claims to present a study of the significance of the scrolls for Judaism. Schiffman's book elab orates the thesis that the control of the scrolls by Christian scholars meant that Christian theology set the agenda for their study.

Even more accusatory is Hershel Shanks, the powerful editor of Biblical Archaeology Review. In an article on anti-Semitism and the scrolls, he remarked that the original team was "Jew-free."50 He noted that "almost all members of the original editing team were openly and vehemently antiIsrael. Frank Moore Cross was a notable exception."51 Shanks went on to criticize Israeli government authorities for being too timid in addressing antiJudaism within the DSS team.

As mentioned previously, eleven Dead Sea caves with manuscripts were eventually uncovered by the 1950s. The greatest number of texts were uncovered in what came to be known as Cave 4. These texts were assigned to a team of scholars from different countries. From the United States came Frank Moore Cross (1921-), a former Presbyterian minister, who would prove to be the most important DSS scholar of the century. He spent most of his career at Harvard University, which became the center of DSS study until the 1990s. Harvard also benefited from the presence of John Strugnell (1930-), a Catholic and another member of the original DSS team. Originally from England, Strugnell eventually became the chief editor of the DSS. Other team members included John Marco Allegro (initially Methodist), Patrick Skehan (American Catholic), Jozef T. Milik (Polish Catholic), and Jean Starcky (French Catholic).

The director of the Qumran excavations was Father Roland de Vaux (1903-1970), a French Dominican priest, who reportedly "began each day on excavation with a mass."52 Although not a trained epigrapher, de Vaux became editor-in-chief for the publication of manuscripts, and held that position until his death in 1970. Some scholars view de Vaux's Catholicism as responsible for his theory that Qumran, the name for the ruins near the Dead Sea Caves, was a monastic community, whose members produced the scrolls and hid them in those caves.

Such scholars also complain that De Vaux's followers have not only influenced archaeological interpretations of Qumran, but have also hindered the use of alternative hypotheses. One of those alternative hypotheses is that Qumran was a Roman villa rather than a Jewish settlement.53 Qumran, under this interpretation, has nothing to do with the DSS. After all, no manuscripts were actually found among the ruins of Qumran. Even if this hypothesis is unsound, the point remains that many scholars perceived religious bias as one reason for suppressing alternative interpretations.54

In a more dramatic turn, two original members of the DSS team eventu ally voiced unexpected religious conclusions. In 1970, John Allegro (1923-1988), who had once considered being a Methodist minister, published The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross, in which he alleged that Christianity had begun as a cult with particular preferences for hallucinogenic mushrooms.55 He was quickly discredited, and his work was criticized heavily.56 Yet Allegro can at least be credited with raising questions about Christian beliefs that would not seem so odd when directed at other religions whose members might also believe in visions, ecstatic experiences, and other phenomena that we know are linked to drugs in many traditions.

Another original member, whose career was marred by religious controversy, is John Strugnell, a prodigy who had been nominated to join the DSS team when he was only twenty-four years old.57 Strugnell had no previous training in paleography, yet he acquired part of his reputation by issuing a critique of John Allegro's work. He helped edit a very important document known as 4QMMT (Miqsat Ma `ase haTorah, or "Some Rulings Pertaining to the Torah").58 He eventually became the chief editor of the DSS in 1984.

But on November 9, 1990, Ha-aretz, a prominent Israeli newspaper, published in Hebrew an interview Strugnell had given on October 28, 1990, to a reporter named Avi Katzman.59 Subsequently, Katzman published an English-language version in the Biblical Archaeology Review.60 In that interview, Strugnell said, "an anti-Judaist, that's what I am" and characterized Judaism as "a horrible religion."6' According to the interview, Strugnell said, "The correct answer of Jews to Christianity is to become Christian."62 He added, "I believe that the answer for Islam, and Buddhism, and all other religions is to become Christian."63

In 1994, when he was given an opportunity to explain or retract his statements to Katzman, Strugnell only reaffirmed them. This reaffirmation came in an interview with Hershel Shanks, to whom he declared, "I am opposed to Judaism."64 He elaborated that he was opposed to Judaism on theological grounds, and so his position was simply a reflection of a "high Christology" he found in the New Testament. What he did regret, and what he attributed to alcoholism and manic-depression, was the choice of words in which he conveyed his views.

Strugnell's views only exacerbated a problem that everyone had been contemplating-namely, that the control of the DSS seemed to be almost exclusively in the hands of Christians. While Strugnell paradoxically did recruit (or allow) a number of Jewish scholars to work on the scrolls, including Deborah Dimant and Emanuel Tov, his comments, at minimum, contributed to the perception that there was Christian bias in the study of the DSS.

Nonetheless, it remains the case that having Christian scholars control the scrolls for so long helped set the agenda and/or hinder progress, depending on your viewpoint. And where we have made progress, it has only served to show that both Judaism and Christianity were much more complex than previously thought. The numerous books that have come to light among the DSS show that the Bible could have been made from a number of possible combinations of books. That is part of the reason the Dead Sea Scrolls have helped to end biblical studies as we know it.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

If the problems posed by the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible seem formidable, the text of the New Testament historically would seem much safer, judging by the propaganda one reads. Indeed, one of the greatest points of pride among Christian apologists is the supposed ample evidence for the reliability of the New Testament text. Norman Geisler and William E. Nix are typical of such self-described fundamentalist scholars when they confidently assert:

> It is sufficient to remember at this point that whereas there are only 643 manuscripts by which the Iliad is reconstructed, 9 or 10 good ones for Caesar's Gallic Wars, 20 manuscripts of note for Titus Livy's History of Rome, and only 2 by which Tacitus is known in the modern world, yet

> there are 5,366 Greek manuscript witnesses that attest to part or all of the New Testament text.65

But it is not just fundamentalists who trumpet such figures. They may also be found in Bruce M. Metzger's The Text of the New Testament, a long-time standard handbook used in both in secular academia and in seminaries.66

Such apologists often also couple this statistical "fact" with an appeal to how conscientious Christian scribes were about accuracy.67 The implication is that one ought to have more confidence in the supernatural and historical claims made in the New Testament than one can have in the historical and supernatural claims of famous works such as the Iliad or the Odyssey.

Not only are such comparisons unfair, but they are also very misleading. The unfairness lies in comparing the Christian "best" with the non-Christian "worst." The truth is that such comparisons depend on when one makes the comparison. For Augustus Caesar, the first Roman emperor (27 BCE-14 CE), we have inscriptions and texts completely contemporary with his life. The Res Gestae, a record of Augustus Caesar's deeds, reputedly narrated by Augustus himself, is still extant, and we could just as easily argue that it represents Augustus's own words more faithfully than anything we have for Jesus.68 Even the oldest Greek manuscripts of Jesus' words are translations because Jesus probably spoke in Aramaic.

Prior to the discovery of the DSS in 1947, the Qur'an had many more manuscripts much closer to its original date of composition than did the Hebrew Bible. The stories of Abraham were preserved in Hebrew manuscripts from about 1000 CE. That means that nearly three thousand years separate Abraham, who is thought to have lived around 1950 BCE by traditionalist chronologies, and the medieval Hebrew manuscripts that preserve his story.

If one argues that the medieval Hebrew manuscripts did speak of Abraham only two thousand nine hundred fifty years after he is supposed to have lived, then we could compare that with Muhammad, who is the subject of millions of copies of the reports about his life some fourteen hundred years after he was alive. In fact, Muslims often compare the purity of the Qur' anic text to the staggering number of variants found in New Testament manuscripts as proof that the Qur'an is a much better reflection of God's revelation than the Christian

scriptures. Thus, Maulana Muhammad `Ali comments:

> The Qur'an is one, and no copy differing in even a diacritical point is met with in the possession of one among four hundred million Muslims ... no one raised a voice against the purity of the text of the Holy Qur' an. A manuscript with the slightest variation in the text is unknown.[69]

This statement on behalf of the Qur'an, of course, is not accurate. There are variants that include not only diacritical points, but other features as wel1?° Likewise, authoritative Islamic sources tell us that the Caliph Uthman burned "all other Quranic materials."" Nonetheless, and as we show further below, when compared to the Qur'an and other religious texts, biblical manuscripts show an astounding number of variants.

Similarly, copies of the Book of Mormon, which is regarded as heretical by most evangelical Christians, had millions of copies of its foundational story within two hundred years of its birth, while it took Christianity a thousand years to accumulate its five thousand plus manuscripts. If someone complains that it is unfair to compare scriptures copied before the advent of printing to those copied and distributed after printing was invented, then any good theologian can argue that God's plan was precisely to introduce the book of Mormon after printing to achieve maximum effect.

Behind all the efforts to reconstruct the text of both the Old and New Testament is the fallacy that it somehow matters that we have an original text. Among the more conservative religionists, the idea is that something closer to the events must be held to be more historically reliable. However, one cannot equate the validity of a historical claim with the state of preservation of a report of that historical claim. Writing down a claim correctly is not the same as proving that claim to be true. After all, the quality of a copy says nothing about the quality of the claim. Take a videorecording of a nonsensical speech, for example; the speech will be nonsense regardless of the recording's accuracy.

The last point brings us to yet another fallacy, which is equating the quantity of contemporary copies of a claim with the validity of the claim. Today, with photocopiers and computers, one can make a million copies of a false claim. But the medium really makes little difference. Any scribe in the ancient world could write down something that did not happen, and five thousand copies of that false

report would not make that report any more true. Nor would it matter if the five thousand copies were fully contemporary with the claim. Since the number of copies of a claim has zero value for determining the truth of the claim, 5000 x 0 = 0 in terms of the validity of the New Testament manuscripts for determining the historicity of any claims therein.

The fact is that there are plenty of other religious traditions that have produced scriptures fully contemporary with the events they report. At Medjugorje (old Yugoslavia), the presumed witnesses to the apparitions of Mary produced texts within hours of the supposed events, and now there are millions of copies of their reports within a couple of decades after those events occurred (see chapter 4 for more details). But one will not find many Protestant evangelicals swayed by the argument that these reports are trustworthy because there are so many copies (even videotapes) that have recorded perfectly the very words of the claimants.

THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS

Reconstructing the text of the New Testament has problems that may surpass those found in the Old Testament. First, most readers do not realize that the translations of the New Testament are based on a composite and hypothetical text, not an actual manuscript. In the case of the Hebrew Bible, for example, we can appeal to an actual Hebrew manuscript such as the Leningrad Codex. In the case of the most authoritative current editions of the Greek New Tes tament (e.g., the United Bible Societies fourth edition and the Aland-Nestle twenty-seventh edition), major Bible societies have simply provided a composite and reconstructed text that is not identical to that of any single ancient manuscript.

Some textual critics deny that this is a problem. Thus, the respected textual critic Eldon J. Epp comments, "[T]he artificiality of our critical editions is a nonissue, for a critical edition of any ancient writing is by nature a reconstruction."72 However, the problem is that the New Testament is not regarded as just "any ancient writing." It is regarded as the word of God, and so any admission of reconstruction is an admission that we do not have the word of God as originally intended. As such, a reconstructed text becomes useless when measured against any perceived intended purpose of communicating God's original word to the masses.

To further understand the problems posed by the New Testament, we need to understand what is called the Textus Receptus of the New Testament. The Textus Receptus is the text that for hundreds of years was believed to be the best text of the New Testament. It is the text that lies beneath the King James Version, and it is the text regarded by some as the only text inspired by God. Pensacola Christian College (Florida), for example, requires students to accept the following article of faith prior to admission:

> We believe God has kept that promise by preserving His infallible Word in the traditional Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and that the Authorized Version (KJV) is an accurate English translation of the preserved Word of God.7"

While the Textus Receptus may not matter to many liberal Christians, Pensacola Christian College and Bob Jones University, another fundamentalist institution, clashed bitterly over the issue recently. In a widely distributed video, Pensacola Christian College accused Bob Jones of diluting reliance on the Textus Receptus, precipitating a fiery exchange of letters between the institutions.

The term Textus Receptus actually originated as part of a "marketing ploy" of Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir, two brothers who owned a publishing house in Leiden (Netherlands). The Elzevir brothers in the preface to their 1633 Greek New Testament made this hyperbolic promise to the reader: "You now have text received by all, [and] in which we neither corrupted nor changed anything."74

What the Elzevir brothers had produced, in fact, was highly dependent on the work of Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), the brilliant Dutch humanist. In 1514 Cardinal Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros of Spain printed the first New Testament in Greek, but Church bureaucracy and other reasons delayed its publication until 1522. So in 1516 Erasmus became the first to publish a printed Greek New Testament. Erasmus used four Greek manuscripts for his version, and some of the gaps were filled by translating the Latin version of the Bible back into Greek. In any case, Erasmus's text proved to be very popular; it is the foundation of the most important Protestant translations, such as those of Martin Luther. Various other famous publishers, such as Stephanus (who introduced versification into the Bible in 1551) and Theodore Beza, published important subsequent editions, but they all depended on Erasmus's editions to a great

extent.

The same was the case with the Textus Receptus printed by the Elzevir brothers in 1633, which actually was their sophomore edition (their first had been completed in 1624). The Textus Receptus consists of a composite and complex family of texts that is also denominated as the Byzantine family of texts. This family of Greek manuscripts forms the vast majority of all Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. However, the problem is that they are mostly regarded as late, with the bulk of them having been produced between the tenth and fifteenth centuries.

THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS OVERTHROWN?

With virtually every important Protestant Bible dependent on the Erasmian Textus Receptus, it was sheer heresy in 1881 when two English biblical scholars, Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, dared to publish The New Testament in the Original Greek.75 This revolutionary edition of the Greek New Testament is often credited with the final overthrow of the Textus Receptus. Replies included vicious attacks by pro-Textus Receptus Christians, such as Dean Burgon, David Otis Fuller, and Benjamin C. Wilkinson. The last even quoted Westcott's personal correspondence for evidence that he worshiped Mary and believed in evolution in order to discredit his Greek New Testament.76 Advocacy of the Textus Receptus has now been relegated to a few conservative institutions, but there are efforts to revive it under another name, the Majority Text.77

The case for the Textus Receptus, in fact, began falling apart not long after the Elzevir brothers helped to coin the famous rubric. Already by the early eighteenth century, an Oxford scholar named John Mill (1645-1707) had collected some thirty thousand variants in biblical manuscripts 78 Many scholars were so alarmed by Mill's collection of variants that much of the modern history of textual criticism can be explained as an effort to redeem the original out of the chaos of the copies." Metzger and Ehrman credit Karl Lachmann (1793-1851) with being "[t]he first recognized scholar to break totally with the Textus Receptus."80 Lachmann published his edition of the Greek New Testament in 1831, and it was not based on any previous printed edition.

In the nineteenth century, important new manuscripts came to light. Some of

these were much earlier than anything possessed by the publishers of the Textus Receptus. Among the most prolific of these discoverers was Count Constantine von Tischendorf (1815-1874).81 Of primary importance is Tischendorf's acquisition of the so-called Codex Sinaiticus, which is dated to the fourth century, and which contains the entire New Testament. It is so named because it was housed at St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai Peninsula. While Tischendorf's own account of his "discovery" paints it quite heroically, more recent accounts suggest that he either stole the manuscript or did not keep his promise to return it.82

Dated even earlier than Sinaiticus were collections of papyri acquired by Sir Chester Beatty of London in 1930 and 1931.83 These are now housed in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, which I visited in 1996 in order to inspect some New Testament manuscripts. The collection includes manuscripts dating to the third century. In 1934, the oldest dated manuscript of the New Testament, catalogued now as P52, was recognized among some fragments at the Manchester Library, where it is still kept. Although the oldest manuscript yet found, it contains only a few verses of John 18.84

Also significant is the Bodmer papyrus collection, named for Martin Bodmer, which was acquired in 1955 and 1956, and contains P66, which includes "some 440 alterations introduced between the lines."85 This alone discredits the idea that scribes saw alteration of manuscripts as an immutable taboo. The alterations have led even Gordon Fee, who was trained at the conservative Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, to conclude that "this scribeturned-recensor was interested neither in MS purity ... nor in `scholarly' recensions of the type we might expect in Alexandria. Rather, he was interested in presenting a good, readable text, which smooths out grammar and tends to remove difficulties."86 Fee specifically sees his conclusions as opposed to some of those of Kenyon.

As with most manuscripts, their original provenance can be a problem. We suspect that most came from Egypt, and certainly those excavated at Oxyrhynchus (Egypt) can be said to have had their final resting place there. Yet, as the case of Tischendorf attests, the path acquisition can be mired in mystery because we are often dealing with people who don't want others to know the source. The noted papyrologist E. G. Turner warned, "Any statement about provenance made by a finder or a dealer in antiquities is open to suspicion. Such

persons are not likely to reveal the source of discovery while the stream is still running nor possibly to put themselves and others within the reach of the law concerning antiquities."87 People might say, for example, that an artifact came from Site X in order to cash in on the value of site X or to hide the artifact's true origin. In short, we have a lot of texts whose origins are unclear.

THE NESTLE-ALAND/UBS EDITIONS

We have claimed repeatedly that academic scholars can be just as religionist as the so-called fundamentalist scholars. The difference is the type of religion they espouse and the way in which they go about representing their religionism in secular garb. This is illustrated very well today by the most widely used editions of the Greek New Testament, which are commonly known as the NestleAland editions and the UBS editions. The NestleAland editions are named after Eberhard Nestle (1851-1913), who prepared his first edition of the Novum Testamentum Graece in 1898. His son, Erwin Nestle (1883-1972), assumed his father's legacy, beginning in 1927. Kurt Aland (1915-1994) added his name to Nestle's editions beginning in 1952, and by 1960 they had become known as NestleAland editions.

The late Kurt Aland and his wife, Barbara Aland, are perhaps the most authoritative figures in the publication of the Greek New Testament in the last half century. Both have long been associated with the Munster Institute for New Testament Textual Research (Munster Institut for neutestamentliche Textforschung), which was founded in 1959 by Kurt Aland. The Munster Institute maintains a standard list of New Testament manuscripts, and scholars use as their standard reference the catalog numbers the Munster Institute assigns to all new discoveries of New Testament manuscripts.88 Barbara Aland headed the Munster Institute from 1983 to 2004. Since 2004, Professor Holger Strutwolf has directed it.

Another important current edition of the Greek New Testament is that of the United Bible Societies (UBS) edition, so named because it is the product of a joint effort of the American, British and Foreign, Dutch, Scottish, and Wurttemberg societies. In 1966 UBS produced its first edition of the Greek New Testament.` However, the third UBS edition (1975) unified its text with the twenty-sixth NestleAland edition (1979). In 1993, this unification was highlighted by the simultaneous publication of the UBS fourth edition and the

NestleAland twenty-seventh edition. In short, the major organizations involved in printing editions of the Greek New Testament now agree on the reconstructed text of the New Testament.

We mention the dizzying array of numbered editions to make a more important point. Despite all these editions, there has been little progress beyond what Westcott and Hort did. This much has already been noted by Ian A. Moir, a biblical scholar at New College in Edinburgh (Scotland) who, in his review of the NestleAland twenty-sixth edition, remarked that "we are no nearer to the autographs than we were a century ago."90 Moir, in fact, fears that what is happening is simply the development of a new "Textus Receptus," and partly for marketing reasons. As he phrases it:

> In the wake of Vatican II, a desire to cash in on the improved ecumenical climate led to publishing ventures like "The Common Bible" for which, so far as I know, no authorization was asked from the churches.... It would seem that similar motives got mixed up with the publication of NestleAland 26. In the first place forces have been joined with the United Bible Societies. The Greek NT is still a "best-seller" and therefore a market worth capturing-so the UBS has made a common cause with the other main publishing agency: the Deutsche Bibelstiftung in Stuttgart, and so the way is again set in the direction of a monopoly.91

The response by Aland only confirmed the importance he placed on the great amount of "buyers and users" ("Kaufern and Benutzern") to justify the title of "Standard Text."92 Indeed, the control of the Greek editions of the New Testament helps control the translations produced from them.

We can chart how little has changed in mathematical terms. Consider this count of differences between Westcott-Hort and the NestleAland (twentyfifth edition) by Kurt and Barbara Aland. They count a total of 558 differences, distributed as follows: 293 differences in the Gospels, 66 in Acts, 111 in the Pauline letters, 41 in the Catholic letters, and 47 in the book of Revelation.93 Even if we grant that not all differences may be equally important, that is a miniscule amount of differences (.4 percent) in some 138,000 total Greek words contained in the UBS edition.

But if there are some scholars who tell us that our New Testament text is

virtually the same as that created some one hundred twentyfive years ago, the marketing of textual criticism wants to give a different impression. Indeed, anyone who tries to keep up with the literature on textual criticism is immediately drawn to how often advances and novelty are advertised in the titles of books. Thus, we have The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research (1995), Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism (2002), and Recent Developments in Textual Criticism (2003), to name just a few titles.94

Indeed, the advertisement of novelty and up-to-dateness is common to almost anything in publishing, but textual critics must persuade readers to plod through some of the minutiae that pervades textual criticism. The larger point, however, is that textual criticism's desperate effort to make it appear that it is making progress belies the more realistic mathematics that show that not much has changed in what we call the text of the New Testament at all in the last one hundred twentyfive years. But it is what has changed, namely the dismantling of the idea of a retrievable "original," that signals that profession's doom.

ARBITRARY METHODS

I am not arguing that all of the textual decisions made by textual critics are unsound. But when we look more closely at how these editors work, we find that their decisions sometimes seem no less arbitrary and religionistic than others we might make instead. K. D. Clarke and K. Bales noted this much when they reviewed the rating system of the UBS editions.95 The rating system consists of letters designating the degree of certainty editors assign to a passage (or portion thereof). Thus, the letter A designates the highest degree of certainty, and the letter D the least degree of certainty. An A rating, in effect, is another way of saying that the editors believe the text is equivalent to the original.

Clarke and Bales found that the percentage of A ratings assigned in the UBS' edition was 9 percent, but that the proportion had increased to 36 percent in UBS4.96 But more disturbing is that the reason for this grade inflation has never been clearly delineated. Moreover, Clarke and Bales also saw that the definition of an A rating had changed from "virtually certain" in UBS' to "certain" in UBS4. In UBS4, a B rating now meant that the text was "almost certain," which is difficult to differentiate from the "virtually certain" definition of an A rating in UBS'. Clarke and Bales concluded that "[a]s it now stands, an unfounded letter-rating upgrade appears to have taken place and may instill in

users of UBS4 a false sense of textual optimism."97

In general, criteria for finding the best or earliest reading are classed as internal and external criteria. Internal criteria look at the texts themselves to see what in them would explain the changes in a text (e.g., a spelling mistake).98 External criteria look at the context outside of the manuscript in question to explain changes in a text (e.g., theological beliefs). Currently, the dominant method for deciding what is the best reading is called the "eclectic method." It is so named because it is not really a single method but rather a sort of "pick-and-choose" method that depends on the situation, as the textual critic sees it.99 As Eldon J. Epp describes it, "[T]he very name `eclectic' ... discloses the fact that the method does not have the solution." 100

The arbitrary nature of such eclectic methods also may be gauged by examining some of the explanations provided by Bruce M. Metzger's A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, which "is designed to serve as a companion to the third edition of the United Bible Society's Greek New Testament."101 Consider Acts 4:24 (RSV):

> And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them."

But some Greek manuscripts bear the equivalent of "you are God" after "Lord" (or "Sovereign"), phrasing that is preserved in the King James Version as "Lord, thou art God, which hast made ..."

The UBS edition decided that the Greek words corresponding to "thou" (or "Thou art God") should be omitted. The actual variant is not as important here as the reason that Metzger provides for choosing that variant. Metzger says that "[t]he shortest form of the text appears to be the oldest; the additions were doubtless made in the interest of heightening the apostles' reverence in prayer. If one of the longer expressions were original, no scribe would have abbreviated it." 102

Yet all of this seems to psychoanalyze the author and the scribe. How could we determine that the author himself did not mean to heighten his own reverence in prayer by having "thou/you" or "Thou art God" there in the first place? Do

only scribes care about reverence? And what if a later scribe omitted "thou art God" for some other reason? How would we know?103

But in Matthew 27:16, Metzger prefers omission, even when he himself indicates that the longer text might be older. In that passage, we are introduced to the man commonly known as Barabbas, the prisoner who was released by Pontius Pilate instead of Jesus. However, some manuscripts also record the name of that prisoner as Jesus Barabbas here and in Matthew 27:17. As Metzger notes, Origen, perhaps the greatest textual critic of the early Church, knew of manuscripts that omit the "Jesus" part of the name. Origen approved of this omission because "in the whole range of the scriptures we know that no one who is a sinner [is called] Jesus."104

According to Metzger, "A majority of the Committee was of the opinion that the original text of Matthew had the double name in both verses, and that Iiovv [Jesus] was deliberately suppressed in most witnesses for reverential considerations."105 Indeed, there is much more reason to omit the name Jesus from Jesus Barabbas than there is reason to add Jesus to Barabbas. Therefore, one could argue that the longer name, Jesus Barabbas, is more likely original, and theological reasons were responsible for shortening his name.

But "reverentiality" is the least of the problems for Christians. One cannot escape noticing that a name such as Jesus Barabbas might also provide evidence that there were two people named Jesus who might have been confused with each other at the crucifixion. The likelihood of confusing one Jesus with the other also might impugn the crucifixion (and resurrection) accounts. That is to say, what if Jesus Barabbas was really the Jesus crucified instead of Jesus of Nazareth?

Yet after saying that the committee believed Jesus Barabbas was probably the original form of the name, the UBS edition still encloses the name "Jesus" with brackets, which indicates an uncertain or improbable reading. The reason given is "slender external support."106 This reason, of course, contradicts what was just said by Origen, who would constitute "external support." Origen admitted that the Jesus part was being suppressed for reverential and theological reasons. On the other hand, we find no external witness insisting that "Jesus" should be added to Barabbas for reverential reasons. If we apply the standard rule that a more problematic reading is to be preferred as more original, then it is

more likely that Jesus Barabbas is original.'01

Despite acknowledging that a name could be omitted for "reverential" and theological reasons, we see a contradictory rationale in Acts 18:1. In that passage, some manuscripts read, "After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth," which is reflected in the King James Version. However, the UBS prefers a reading without "Paul," and this is reflected in the RSV as: "After this he left Athens and went to Corinth." Metzger's explanation for why the UBS does not regard "Paul" as original: "Certainly if the words o Uav2os [=Paul] were present originally no one would have deleted them." 108

It is plausible that some scribe wanted to clarify that it was Paul being talked about in the sentence. Yet Metzger relies on the sweeping claim that "no one" would have deleted Paul's name, and this despite the aforementioned deletion of "Jesus" in Mathew 27:16 and 27:17. We may summarize the contradictory reasons that the UBS edition provides for omitting the words in question as follows:

	Word(s) omitted	**Reason for omission**
Mat. 27:16,17	“Jesus” [Barabbas]	“reverential considerations” suppressed it; no external support.
Acts 4:24	“You are God”	Scribes added it for reverential reasons.
Acts 18:1	“Paul”	No one would have deleted it if it was present originally.

If this subjectivity is not enough to cast doubt on textual critical criteria, we also have other researchers who tell us that we should see the longer texts as more original. James R. Royse, who conducted statistical studies of many early papyri, concluded that "these figures suggest strongly that the general tendency during the early period of textual transmission was to omit. The corresponding general principle of textual evaluation would thus seem to be that, other things

being equal, one should prefer the longer reading."109 If so, then Metzger's tendency to omit words in the passages above may be misguided.

On the other hand, it would be naive to ignore all the wiggle room involved in Royse's phrase "all other things being equal" because all other things are rarely equal in textual criticism. After all, other things could involve anything from a scribe's theology to the degree of fatigue from which he or she was suffering at the moment. Moreover, since we are mostly talking about papyri of the second and third centuries, we have no way of knowing what the scribal tendencies were in the truly "early period," which would be the time of Jesus in the 30s and 40s CE.

The point of citing Royse and Metzger is to demonstrate that their canons of textual criticism are not only scientifically unverifiable, but also that the application of those rules often yield contradictory answers, as the decisions explained by Metzger show. For our purposes, Helmut Koester, a professor at Harvard Divinity School, sums up well the uncertain and unverifiable premises that underlie textual criticism:

> New Testament textual critics have been deluded by the hypothesis that the archetypes of the textual tradition which were fixed ca. 200 CE-and how many archetypes for each Gospel?-are (almost) identical with the autographs. This cannot be confirmed by any external evidence. On the contrary, whatever evidence there is indicates that not only minor, but also substantial revisions of the original texts have occurred during the first hundred years of the transmission. "°

So it may well be just as Ian A. Moir suggested-marketing and ecumenical theology are really the more important factors in the creation of all past and current editions of the Greek New Testament.

ARE CENTRAL TEACHINGS AFFECTED?

As we have argued, the so-called critical scholar often does not differ from the fundamentalist in his or her bibliolatry. One illustration is provided by Alister McGrath, the prolific Oxford University historian. In his otherwise superb history of the King James Bible, he makes the following comment when speaking of the variations in the printed Greek New Testaments behind that

version:

> It must be made clear immediately that this does not call into question the general reliability of the King James Bible. The issue concerns minor textual variations. Not a single teaching of the Christian faith is affected by these variations, nor is any major historical aspect of the gospel narratives or early Christianity

Among mainstream academic scholars, there is relatively more acceptance of the idea that textual changes can make a difference. In his presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1965, Kenneth W. Clark admitted that "[i]t is also a false assurance, offered by many, that textual criticism can have no effect upon Christian doctrine."'' Yet Clark resorts to euphemisms to avoid casting scribal changes in any negative light. As he describes them, such scribal changes may be "[w]illful and deliberate, yes. But not tampering, falsification, and fraud. Alteration, yes; but not corruption."' 13

But why can't we characterize as "falsification" the act of willfully changing something so that it is the opposite, or different from, what is intended? And if we cannot know what the scribe intended, then how can Clark characterize it as not fraudulent? Is claiming a scribe does not intend to defraud entail any less an ascription of motive than saying a scribe does intend to defraud? And why can't we characterize as "corruption" any alteration that no longer results in what we regard as an original state?

Most recently the reticence to label alterations as corruption has been rebuffed powerfully by Bart Ehrman's The Orthodox Corruption of Scrip tune, in which he describes in great and expert detail how theological motives may have been involved in producing readings that many Christians consider to be God's word.14 Ehrman concludes that

> [t]he texts of these books were by no means inviolable; to the contrary, they were altered with relative ease and alarming frequency. Most of the changes were accidental, the result of scribal ineptitude, carelessness, or fatigue. Others were intentional, and reflect the controversial milieux within which they were produced."'

One of the doctrines that orthodox Christians wanted their scriptures to teach

was that Jesus was the Son of God from eternity. The orthodox were opposed to other Christians who believed Jesus became the Son of God only after his baptism. This is reflected in Mark 1:1. Whereas some ancient manuscripts, including Sinaiticus, the earliest complete manuscript of the New Testament, lack the words "Son of God," the RSV translates the verse as: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The fact that Sinaiticus's reading occurs in manuscripts with a wide geographic spread, Ehrman believes, is evidence for its being the older reading relative to verses with "Son of God" in them.

The same applies to John 1:18, which the RSV translates as: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known." Yet some of the oldest manuscripts, including p66 and P75, have "only begotten God" instead of "the only Son." This may signal the start of a tradition that portrays Jesus as God rather than as just a human being. Of course, Ehrman has to ascribe motives just like conservative scholars do, but the point is that many Christian scholars believe it does make a difference whether the words "only begotten God" are there or not.

And since the original copies of the books of today's Bible do not exist, one cannot know if an important doctrine has been omitted, added, or changed. The fundamentalist illusion of an authoritative Bible that accurately transmits the word of God can also be refuted by 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

> All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Logically, the expression "All scripture" (Greek: m6,6a ypa4~) indicates that there is no such thing as a passage that may be considered less doctrinally important than any other passage. Note that the passage does not say that only some portions are useful for doctrine, but that all are useful for doctrine. So the fact that some copies of the Bible have fewer verses than others indicates that doctrine is necessarily affected by the loss or addition of verses.

Recall also that Deuteronomy 4:2 says: "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it; that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you." If that is the case, then a single

word of difference between two manuscripts is already invalidating this injunction. Recall also Matthew 5:18: "For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished." The fact is that the many differences in the copies of the law, and of the whole Bible, show that much more than a dot and an iota have been changed.

Historically, the supposition that changes in texts do not affect anything crucial fails to explain why so much conflict and violence resulted from changes in texts. Eusebius, the influential church historian of the fourth century, tells us that the followers of a man named Theodotus were reviled by many Christians. Here are some of the reasons cited by one of Eusebius's sources:

> They have not feared to corrupt divine Scriptures, they have nullified the rule of ancient faith ... they did not fear to lay hands on the divine scriptures, saying that they had corrected them. And that I do not calumniate them in saying this any who wish can learn, for if any be willing to collect and compare with each other the texts of each of them, he would find them in great discord, for the copies of Asclepiades do not agree with those of Theodotus, and it is possible to obtain many of them because their disciples have diligently written out copies corrected, as they say, but really corrupted by each of them.116

Eusebius went on to discuss a "repeated corruption" (natty ~mtStantipaOLnty) by the followers of Theodotus. Interestingly, the complaints against Theodotus include the fact that his followers could not "show the originals from which they made their copies." 11

So, if nothing important is being changed, why all the bitter complaints? Why the charges that Theodotus's emendations of the text are part of his atheism?

MARK 16:9–20

The claim that no central doctrines are affected by textual changes often betrays an elitist and/or theologically sectarian view. This is because not all texts are equally important to the various sects of Christianity. And if we con centrate on specific cases, we can understand that whether major doctrines are affected by a

given textual change is a relative and arbitrary judgment.

Consider Mark 16:9-20. It has long been known that there were at least four variant versions of the text that followed verse 8 in Mark 16.18 In other words, there were at least four variant endings of the book of Mark. The King James version preserves the so-called long ending with a full twelve verses. However, the earliest complete manuscripts of the New Testament, the Codex Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, do not have anything after verse 8. Jerome, an idol of orthodox Christianity, reported that "almost all Greek copies do not have this concluding portion."19 That is why most modern Bibles either remove it or include it with some notation about its dubious originality.

So do these verses not make a difference to Christians? Some defenders of the resurrection of Jesus thought so.120 After all, if Mark 16:8 ends with verse 8, then there is no story of anyone actually seeing or speaking with a resurrected Jesus. All we have is a statement that he is risen and a promise that he will appear. But it ends with nothing more than a group of women in fear. Thus, what is usually regarded as the earliest Christian gospel would not have much of a resurrection story-the door is left open for those who argue that the resurrection was not part of the earliest recorded Christian tradition.

This passage may not be very important to Lutherans, but it is very important to Pentecostals, who constitute one of the fastest-growing segments of Christianity in the entire world.'2' Mark 16:17 says that believers will speak in "new tongues." Pentecostals believe that this applies to speaking angelic tongues, and the founders of Pentecostalism saw the "speaking in tongues" phenomenon as a sign of the end of the world. While there are other texts that can serve as support for Pentecostals (Acts 2), this is the one text where Jesus himself promises all future believers that they will have this ability.

The text may not be important to Anglicans, but it is very important to certain sects of snake-handlers known primarily in Appalachia.122 It is in Mark 16:18 that we have the promise that believers will be able to pick up snakes and will not die even if bitten by poisonous ones. The fact is that some believers have died while demonstrating their faith in this text. The same may be said for those that believe in faith healing, which also is reflected in Mark 16:18.

JOHN 7:53–8:11

This section of John, found in the King James Version, is called the pericopae adulterae (the adulteress's section). It is no longer regarded as authentic by most modern translations, and this has aroused the ire of many conservative Christians, who defend the Textus Receptus.123 If doctrines are not affected by differences in texts, then why all the outrage at its removal?

In fact, a reading of the entire passage shows that many important theological principles and lessons that have been applied for hundreds of years by many Christians are enshrined in this passage.124 One centers on John 8:7, where Jesus declared, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." He was responding to a call to stone to death a woman caught in adultery.125

For some Christians this is a primary text to support the abolition of the death penalty. In the Hebrew Bible the death penalty was permissible if at least two witnesses were found to testify against a person in the commission of a capital sin (Deuteronomy 17:6-7). In this passage, however, Jesus changes the entire set of rules. Instead of making a minimum number of witnesses a requirement to execute the death penalty, Jesus requires the sinlessness of any executioner. Since no one is without sin, then no one would be qualified to carry out the death penalty. The death penalty, consequently, would be abolished altogether.

And the fact is that Christians today still use this passage when opposing the death penalty. A case in point is the statement on the death penalty by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Part of its argument follows:

> Lutheran theological tradition has maintained that society is ruled by the Law and is influenced and nourished by the Gospel. Renewed by the Gospel, Christians, as salt of the earth (Mat 5:13) and light of the world (Mat 5:14), are called to respond to violent crime in the restorative way taught by Jesus (Mat 5:38-39) and shown by his actions (John 8:3-11).... It is because of this church's ministry with and to people affected by violent crime that we oppose the death penalty.'26

Of the four passages provided in this section of the argument against the death penalty, it is only John 8:3-11 that speaks explicitly of Jesus' opinion on the death penalty. It is fair to say, therefore, that without that passage, the case

against the death penalty would be much weaker. And if a matter of life and death does not show how textual criticism can make a difference, then what else would?

1 JOHN 5:7–8

Called the Comma Johanneum by scholars, this passage historically has been very important for Trinitarians. The King James Version reads in verse 7: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." This, of course, offers strong support for the doctrine of the Trinity. It is, in fact, the only text that is so explicit about a doctrine that is otherwise difficult to find in the New Testament.

Yet even by the time of Erasmus there was suspicion that it was not original. Erasmus himself noted that he could not find a single Greek manuscript with that reading, and the reading was mainly known from the Latin Vulgate. Legend has it that he promised to include it in any subsequent edition if someone could find him a Greek manuscript.127 One was indeed "found" with that reading not long afterward, and he included it in his edition of 1522. This came, therefore, to be part of the Textus Receptus used by the King James Bible.

Today, this verse is almost universally rejected, and most modern translations no longer have it. The NRSV says: "In fact there are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three are in agreement." Peter J. Thuesen, a historian of translations, has documented how often American ministers reviled these changes in the text. Thuesen quotes Homer Ritchie, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, as saying that the translators of the RSV "omitted the verse without so much as a footnote to acknowledge their crime."" If no doctrine is changed by such alterations, then it leaves unexplained why so many self-described fundamentalists are so outraged by its removal in modern versions.

SUMMARY

Textual criticism has made important contributions to our understanding of the Bible. However, those contributions have spelled the end of textual criticism. Historically, the primary goal of biblical textual criticism was to reconstruct the original text. Textual criticism has only shown that this is impossible. Thus,

textual criticism has ended in that sense. More importantly, it is an illusion to think that the destruction of any confidence in finding the original has no crucial consequences for Christianity or Judaism. Bart Ehrman, one of the foremost New Testament textual critics today, described his own experience in journeying away from his belief in inerrancy:

> There are clear reasons for thinking that, in fact, the Bible is not this kind of inerrant guide to our lives: among other things, as I've been pointing out, in many places we (as scholars, or just regular readers) don't even know what the original words of the Bible actually were. My personal theology changed radically with this realization, taking me down roads quite different from the ones I had traversed in my late teens and early twenties.' 29 But such results also indicate that textual criticism cannot survive by simply redirecting itself to the study of the myriad of texts that are associated with canonical or final forms of the Bible.

Textual criticism of the Bible has always mattered to believers rather than to nonbelievers. But if what matters to believers is to have an original text on which to base their lives, then textual criticism is not going to matter to believers either. And if it does not matter to believers, then we really do not see much use for textual criticism anywhere. It becomes more than ever an elite leisure pursuit that will have difficulty asking taxpayers and churchgoers to continue funding an endeavour that brings joys akin to solving Sudoku puzzles, but little benefit to anyone else.

NOTES

1. There are other definitions as well. Emanuel Tov (Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, 2nd ed., [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress; Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2001], p. 1) says: "Textual criticism deals with the origin and nature of all forms of a text, in our case the biblical text."

2. For the goals and agendas in the textual criticism of nonbiblical Latin works in antiquity, see James E. G. Zetzel, Latin Textual Criticism in Antiquity (New York: Arno Press, 1981).

3. Eldon J. Epp, "New Testament Textual Criticism in America: Requiem for a Discipline," JBL 98 (1979): 97. This essay is a printed version of a lecture delivered in 1977 at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature.

4. Eldon J. Epp, "Issues in New Testament Textual Criticism," in Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism, ed. David Alan Black (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), p. 19, n. 19.

5. See especially, Eldon J. Epp, "The Multivalence of the Term `Original Text' in New Testament Textual Criticism," HTR 92, no. 3 (1999): 245-81.

6. Larry W. Hurtado, "Beyond the Interlude? Developments and Directions in New Testament Textual Criticism," in Studies in the Early Text of the Gospels and Acts: The Papers of the First Birmingham Colloqium on the Textual Criticism of the New Testament, ed. D. G. K. Taylor (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), pp. 26-48.

7. Hurtado, "Beyond the Interlude?" p. 30. See the journal's Web site at http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/vol01/vol0l.html (accessed August 15, 2006).

8. B. Talmud, Sotah 20a: NVO W-n 11]TZSn '11711t >1'11 >12 b51v7 5:) nx nnnn rirm rirm mH -'nn i nnN mH 7>nbn

9. For Origen, we distill the account in Ernest Wurthwein, The Text of the Old Testament, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 55-57.

10. Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook of Bible Difficulties (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1992), p. 24.

11. F. J. A. Hort, as cited in Epp, "The Multivalence of the Term `Original Text,'" p. 249.

12. Sir Frederic Kenyon, The Bible and Archaeology (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940), pp. 288-89. Italics are Kenyon's.

13. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions, and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans/Leiden: Brill, 1987), p. 287.

14. Epp, "The Multivalence of the Term `Original Text,'" pp. 245-81. See also Kent D. Clarke, "Original Text or Canonical Text? Questioning the Shape of the New Testament We Translate," in Translating the Bible: Problems and Prospects, ed. Stanley Porter and Richard Hess (London: T&T Clark, 1999), pp. 281-322.

15. Cited in Wurthwein, The Text of the Old Testament, p. 62.

16. Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, p. 184.

17. For experiments that seek to distinguish written and oral sources in the New Testament, see Robert K. McIver and Marie Carroll, "Experiments to Develop Criteria for Determining the Existence of Written Sources, and Their Potential Implications for the Synoptic Problem," JBL 121 (2002): 667-87. For a critique, see John C. Poirier, "Memory, Written Sources, and the Synoptic Problem: A Response to Robert K. McIver and Marie Carroll," JBL 123 (2004): 315-22.

18. Geisler and Howe, When Critics Ask, p. 23.

19. Samuel Fisher, The Rustick's Alarm to the Rabbies (1660), as quoted in David S. Katz, God's Last Words: Reading the English Bible from the Reformation to Fundamentalism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 71-72. Italics are as represented by Katz.

20. Wurthwein, The Text of the Old Testament, p. 24.

21. Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, p. 22.

22. See Marvin H. Pope, Song of Songs (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), p. 320; Ernst Axel Knauf, "Shalma," in The Anchor Bible Dictionary, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:1154.

23. Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, p. 47.

24. Wurthwein, The Text of the Old Testament, p. 30.

25. Aron Dotan, Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia: Prepared According to the Vocalization, Accents, and Masora of Aaron ben Moses ben Asher in the Leningrad Codex (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999).

26. See description at: http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1565630890/1025991955-5276937?v=glance&n=283155 (accessed August 28, 2006) and http://journalofbiblicalstudies.org/Issue2/Book-Review/leningradensia-review.htm (accessed August 28, 2006).

27. Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, p. 103.

28. Ibid., p. 106. The oldest text that apparently cites biblical materials is an amulet found at Ketef Hinnom (near Jerusalem). The text has been dated to the late seventh century BCE, though others date it to the second century BCE. See further, Gabriel Barkay, Andrew G. Vaughn, Marilyn J. Lundberg, and Bruce Zuckerman, "The Amulets from Ketef Hinnom: A New Edition and Evaluation," BASOR 334 (2004): 41-71.

29. Gleason Archer, Survey of Old Testament Introduction (Chicago: Moody, 1974), p. 25.

30. Josh McDowell, The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999), p. 79.

31. Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, p. 162.

32. Ibid., p. 162.

33. F. M. Cross, "New Directions in Dead Sea Scroll Research I: The Text behind the Text of the Hebrew Bible," BR 1, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 12-25.

34. See the numerous examples of such early instability in Emanuel Tov, The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research (Jerusalem: Simor, 1981), especially pp. 3 10-11.

35. For the statistics on Jeremiah, see Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, p. 320.

36. This idea, in turn, is an echo of Kahle's idea of "three text types for the Pentateuch" ("drei Hauptypen des Pentateuchtexes"), which is covered in Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, p. 157.

37. Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, p. 160.

38. Brevard S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), pp. 75-76.

39. Ibid., p. 76.

40. For a desperate effort to explain the differences between quotations of Jesus and the Hebrew Bible, see Gleason L. Archer and G. C. Chirichigno, Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament: A Complete Survey (Chicago: Moody, 1983), especially pp. 44-45, where the authors attempt to explain Deuteronomy 24:1.

41. James Alfred Loader, "The Finality of the Old Testament `Final Text,'" Old Testament Essays 15, no. 3 (2002): 739-53.

42. Ibid., p. 751.

43. Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, p. 177.

44. Ibid., p. xxxv.

45. Ibid., p. 177.

46. Ibid. Words in brackets spell out what Tov has abbreviated.

47. Ibid., p. 178.

48. Ibid., p. 180.

49. Lawrence H. Schiffman, Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their True Meaning for Judaism and Christianity (New York: Doubleday, 1994), p. xiii.

50. Hershel Shanks, "Silence, Anti-Semitism, and the Scrolls," BAR 17, no. 2 (March/April 1991): 54-60.

51. Ibid., p. 55.

52. Thomas W. Davis, Shifting Sands: The Rise and Fall of Biblical Archaeology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 131.

53. A main proponent is Norman Golb, Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls? The Search for the Secret of Qumran (New York: Scribner, 1995). For another alternative archaeological interpretation, see Yizhar Hirschfeld, Qumran in Context: Reassessing the Archaeological Evidence (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004). For an excellent response to these alternative interpretations, see Jodi Magness, The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

54. For alternative interpretations of other aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls, see also Gabrielle Boccaccini, Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

55. John M. Allegro, The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross: A Study of the Nature and Origins of Christianity within the Fertility Cults of the Ancient Near East (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970); Allegro, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Myth (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1992).

56. See Judith Anne Brown, John Marco Allegro: The Maverick of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005). Brown is Allegro's daughter.

57. I have distilled Strugnell's basic biography from John J. Collins, "Strugnell, John," Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls, ed. Lawrence Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (New York: Oxford University Press,

2000) 2:895-96. In addition, I include my own personal observations from experience as Strugnell's student.

58. Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell, Qumran Cave IV V.• Miqsat Marie haTorah, Discoveries in the Judean Desert 10 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

59. On a personal note, I never detected any sort of antiJudaism when I took his course on the Dead Sea Scrolls at Harvard.

60. Avi Katzman, "Dead Sea Scrolls Update: Chief Dead Sea Scrolls Editor Denounces Judaism, Israel; Claims He's Seen Four More Scrolls Found by Bedouin," BAR 17, no. 1 (January/February 1991): 64-65, 70-72.

61. Katzman, "Dead Sea Scrolls Update," p. 64.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid., p. 65.

64. Hershel Shanks, "An Interview with John Strugnell," BAR 20, no. 4 (July/August 1994): 40-47, 57. Quotation is from p. 42.

65. Norman Geisler and William E. Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible (Chicago: Moody, 1986), p. 404. If we apply text-critical methods, we can conclude that Geisler and Nix depend on F. F. Bruce, The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable? (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), p. 16. In describing the manuscripts of Caesar's Gallic Wars, Bruce (p. 16) says, "[O]nly nine or ten are good," while Geisler and Nix say, "9 or 10 good ones for Caesar's Gallic Wars."

66. Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 50-51.

67. For example, the prominent defender of the Textus Receptus, Edward F. Hills (The King James Version Defended: A Space Age Defense of the Historic Christian Faith [Des Moines, IA: Christian Research Press, 1973], p. 106) says: "[M]any trustworthy copies of the original New Testament manuscripts were produced by faithful scribes." Note, however, that his use of "many" grants the

fact that he considers a lot of manuscripts not to be trustworthy.

68. For a standard edition, see P. A. Brunt and J. M. Moore, Res Gestae DiviAugusti: The Achievements of the Divine Augustus (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

69. Maulana Muhammad `Ali, Muhammad and Christ (Columbus, OH: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaaat Islam Lahore, Inc., 1993), p. 4.

70. See Hassein Modarressi, "Early Debates on the Integrity of the Qur' an. A Brief Survey," Studia Islamica 77 (1993): 5-39.

71. Al-Bukhari, 4987/ The Book of Virtues of the Qur'an, 3/Darussalam edition 6:426. Our citations of Al-Bukhari are from the Arabic-English edition of Shahih Al-Bukhari, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam,1997). I cite Al-Bukhari by three alternative formats, each divided by a slash, and as follows: the Hadith number/the name of the book within Al-Bukhari's collection cited by chapter/the Darussalam edition volume and page number.

72. Epp, "Issues in New Testament Textual Criticism," p. 45.

73. See http://www.pcci.edu/Generallnfo/ArticlesofFaith.html (accessed June 19, 2006).

74. My translation of the Latin text in Metzger and Ehrman, The Text of the New Testament, p. 152, n. 36: "Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum: in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damns."

75. We cite Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, The New Testament in the Original Greek (New York: Macmillan, 1898).

76. Benjamin C. Wilkinson, "Our Authorized Bible Vindicated," in Which Bible? ed. David Otis Fuller (Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids International, 1975), especially pp. 278-80.

77. For a critique of the Majority Text by a scholar at the conservative Dallas Theological Seminary, see Daniel B. Wallace, "The Majority Text Theory: History, Methods, and Critique," in The Text of the New Testament in

Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael D. Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 297-320. For a pro-Textus Receptus view, see Maurice Robinson, "New Testament Textual Criticism: The Case for Byzantine Priority," TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism 6 (2001), available at http://rosetta.reltech .org/TC/vo106/Robinson200l.html (accessed June 22, 2006).

78. Metzger and Ehrman, The Text of the New Testament, pp. 154-55.

79. For how deists such as Anthony Collins were already using text-critical arguments against Christianity during the Enlightenment, see Jonathan Sheehan, The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship and Culture (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 43-50. See also Hennning Graf Reventlow, The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), pp. 354-60; John Redwood, Reason, Ridicule and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England 1660-1750 (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976), pp. 210-11.

80. Metzger and Ehrman, The Text of the New Testament, p. 170.

81. Thor Sevicenko, "New Documents on Tischendorf and the Codex Sinaiticus," Scriptorium 18 (1964): 55-80. For Tischendorf's overall work, see Matthew Black and Robert Davidson, Constantin von Ischendorf and the Greek New Testament (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1981).

82. According to James H. Charlesworth (New Discoveries in St. Catherine's Monastery: A Preliminary Report on the Manuscripts, ASOR Monograph Series 3 [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981]), who vistited St. Catherine's monastery in 1979 in an effort to secure access to newly discovered manuscripts, the monks there tell a different story of Tischendorf's acquisition of Sinaiticus. Charlesworth (p. 5) reports that the monks have even posted a letter by Tischendorf on a pillar in the monastery's library. The letter was posted as public proof of Tischendorf's promise. In any case, Charlesworth quotes only part of the Greek letter, which may be found in complete form in Sevicenko "New Documents on Tischendorf," p. 60. Charlesworth, who does not cite Sevicenko, also erroneously reports the date of the letter as 1839, but the letter, as edited by Sevicenko, clearly says "16/28 September, 1859."

83. See Charles Horton, "The Chester Beatty Papyri: A Find of the Greatest Importance," in The Earliest Gospels: The Origins and Transmission of the Earliest Christian Gospels-The Contribution of the Chester Beatty Codex P45, ed. Charles Horton (London: T&T Clark, 2004), pp. 149-60.

84. For even newer discoveries (e.g., Pus, containing the book of Revelation), see Metzger and Ehrman, The Text of the New Testament, p. 61.

85. Ibid., p. 57.

86. Gordon D. Fee, "P75, p66, and Origen," in New Dimensions in New Testament Study, ed. Richard Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974), p. 31. Fee counts four hundred fifty corrections.

87. E. G. Turner, Greek Papyri: An Introduction (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), p. 51.

88. For the history of the Munster Institute, I depend on their official Web site (in German) at http://www.uni-muenster.de/NTTextforschung (accessed June 22, 2006).

89. For a review of this edition, see J. M. Ross, "The United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament," JBL 95 (1976): 112-2 1.

90. Ian A. Moir, "Can We Risk Another `Textus Receptus?'" JBL 100 (1981): 618. See also Hans-Werner Bartsch, "Ein newer Textus Receptus fur das griechische Neue Testament?" NTS 27 (1981): 585-92.

91. Moir, "Can We Risk another `Textus Receptus?'" p. 615.

92. Kurt Aland, "Ein neuer Textus Receptus fur das griechische Neue Testament?" NTS 28 (1982): 145-53. Aland was responding mainly to Bartsch's article rather than to Moir's.

93. These numbers derive from Aland and Aland, The Text of the New Testament, p. 27, chart 1. For the German edition, see Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, Der Text des Neuen Testaments: Einfuhrung in die wissenschaftlichen Ausgaben sowie in Theorie and Praxis der modernen Textkritik (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1982), p. 36, abb. 1.

94. Wim Weren and Dietrich-Alex Koch, eds., Recent Developments in Textual Criticism: New Testament, Other Early Christian and Jewish Literature: Papers Read at a Noster Conference in Munster January 4-6, 2001 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2003).

95. Kent D. Clarke and K. Bales, "The Construction of Biblical Certainty," in Studies in the Early Text of the Gospels and Acts: The Papers of the First Birmingham Colloquium on the Textual Criticism of the New Testament, ed. D. J. K. Taylor (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), pp. 86-93.

96. We follow the convention of indicating these editions by a superscript that should not be confused with a footnote number.

97. Clarke and Bales, "The Construction of Biblical Certainty," p. 93.

98. As Westcott and Hort (The New Testament in the Original Greek, p. 542) define it, "Internal evidence is itself of two kinds, the consideration of what an author is likely to have written, and the consideration of what a copyist is likely to have made himself seem to have written."

99. For basic overviews of the "eclecticism" and its varieties, see Eldon J. Epp, "The Eclectic Method in New Testament Textual Criticism: Solution or Symptom?" in Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism, ed. Eldon J. Epp and Gordon Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 141-73; Gordon Fee, "Rigorous or Reasoned Eclecticism-Which?" in ibid., pp. 124-40.

100. Epp, "The Eclectic Method," p. 173.

101. Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975).

102. Ibid., p. 321.

103. On inferring "intention" in textual criticism, see Wayne C. Kannaday, "`Are Your Intentions Honorable?' Apologetic Interests and the Scribal Revision of Jesus in the Gospels," TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism 11 (2006), http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/volll/volll.html (accessed June 22, 2006); Kannaday, Apologetic Discourse and the Scribal Tradition: Evidence of the

Influence of Apologetic Interests on the Text of the Canonical Gospels (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

104. Metzger, A Textual Commentary, p. 67.

105. Ibid., p. 68.

106. Ibid.

107. On this common rule (sometimes expressed in Latin as lectio dificilior potior), see Metzger and Ehrman, The Text of the New Testament, p. 159. The rule assumes scribes are likely to eliminate problems rather than create them. Therefore, a problematic passage probably is more original.

108. Ibid., p. 460.

109. Royse, "Scribal Tendencies in the Transmission of the Text," in The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research, ed. Ehrman and Holmes, p. 246.

110. Helmut Koester, "The Text of the Synoptic Gospels in the Second Century," in Gospel Traditions in the Second Century: Origins, Recensions, Text, and Transmission, ed. W. L. Petersen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), p. 37.

111. Alister McGrath, In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How It Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture (New York: Doubleday, 2001), p. 242.

112. Kenneth W. Clark, "The Theological Relevance of Textual Variation in Current Criticism of the Greek New Testament," JBL 85 (1966): 5.

113. Ibid.

114. Bart D. Ehrman, The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

115. Ibid., p. 275.

116. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, trans. J. E. L. Oulton, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 5.28.15-17.

117. Ibid., 5.28.18: Kai 86~at avtiiypaOa oOev avtia µetieypawavtio, µ~ exwrly.

118. Metzger and Ehrman, The Text of the New Testament, p. 322; Metzger, A Textual Commentary, pp. 122-26.

119. Metzger and Ehrman, The Text of the New Testament, p. 322.

120. See, for example, David Otis Fuller, ed., Counterfeit or Genuine: Mark 16? John 8? (Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids International, 1975).

121. See Karla Poewe, Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).

122. On these cults, see Thomas Burton, Serpent-Handling Believers (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993). On p. 96, Burton shows photographs of church members wearing vestments with Mark 16:16-18 written on them.

123. Dean Burgon, "Pericope de Adulterae," in Fuller, Counterfeit or Genuine: Mark 16? John 8? pp. 133-58.

124. See Larry J. Kreitzer and Deborah W. Rooke, eds., Ciphers in the Sand: Interpretations of the Woman Taken in Adultery (John 7:53-8:11) (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). For the textual history, see Ulrich Becker, Jesus and die Ehebrecherin: Untersuchungen zur Text-and Uberlieferungsgeschichte von Joh. 7:53-8:11 (Berlin: Adolf Toppelmann, 1963).

125. For the view that the passage was suppressed because of fear that it would encourage sexual freedom in women, see Gail R. O'Day, "John 7:53-8:11: A Study in Misreading," JBL 111 (1992): 631-40.

126. See the statement online at http://www.elca.org/socialstatements/death penalty (accessed June 26, 2006).

127. The earliest recorded reference to Erasmus's supposed promise actually

occurs in 1818, according to a detailed examination of the sources by Henk Jan de Jonge, "Erasmus and the Comma Johanneum," Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses 56 (1980): 381-89. For the date of 1818, see p. 383.

128. Peter J. Thuesen, In Discordance with Scriptures: American Protestant Battles over Translating the Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 109.

129. Bart D. Ehrman, Misquoting Jesus: The Story behind Who Changed the Bible and Why (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2005), p. 14.

Chapter 3

History and Archaeology: Fields Full of Holes

M21ical archaeology lies in ruins, be it literally, socially, or metaphorically. Biblical archaeology once was a premier and even glamorous field within biblical studies, and now even some of its most famous practitioners are proclaiming its death. In 1995, William G. Dever, a doyen of the archaeology of ancient Israel, declared that "American Syro-Palestinian and Biblical archeology are moribund disciplines; and archaeologists like me who have spent a lifetime in the profession, feel like the last members of an endangered species."' In 2006, Ronald Hendel, a professor of the Hebrew Bible at the University of California at Berkeley, remarked, "Biblical Archaeology doesn't really exist today in the way it once did."2

To be fair, Dever and Hendel are speaking of "biblical" archaeology in the sense of archaeology focused on supporting the historicity of the Bible. Dever himself once advocated the broader term "Syro-Palestinian" archaeology, though now his terminology is more varied. His current advice is this: "When asked who we are and what we do, we may say something like `I am a Near Eastern archaeologist, specializing in X, Y, and Z.'"3 Yet, those very debates about terminology signal how much Middle East politics, theology, and a supposedly more secularized archaeology have clashed.

In the twentieth century, America had the brightest luminaries in biblical archaeology, including the biggest giant of them all, William F. Albright (1895-1971). Raised in Chile and in Iowa, Albright not only pioneered the use of ceramic typology for dating archaeological remains, but he also was a "generalist" who was able to contribute to the scholarship of almost every culture of the ancient Near East.' The rest of the bench was not shabby either, and included names such as G. Ernest Wright and James Pritchard.' Today, the dominant archaeologists of ancient Israel are from Israel, and include scholars such as Israel Finkelstein, Raz Kletter, and David Ussishkin

But Dever also sees trouble for any broader "Syro-Palestinian" archaeology that envisions itself as more secular, less focused on Israel, and less connected

with the Bible.' Part of that problem lies in the fact that the study of biblical history, which has been intimately tied to biblical archaeology, is itself increasingly under attack. As Dever phrases it, "If the actual history of the Biblical world no longer matters, then archaeology is clearly irrelevant."'

Socially, the death of biblical archaeology can also be seen in the bitter personal polemics that permeate what is left of the field. Debates and personal polemics, of course, have always been part of intellectual endeavors. In the past, we have seen these personal battles between G. W. Leibniz and Isaac Newton in science, and between the philosophers David Hume and JeanJacques Rousseau.' In anthropology, there was the famous feud between Derek Freeman and Margaret Mead.'

If we move to a field closer to biblical archaeology, we note the bitter feuds in classical archaeology, which centers on Greece and Rome. In one review of that field, Stephen Dyson remarks that "[i]ntergenerational warfare has broken out between the emerging postprocessualists and the unreconstructed New Archaeologists, and other non-trendies like traditional Marxists, whose vehemence often makes the articles and review pages of archaeological journals seem like an intellectual Yugoslavia."10 Indeed, what is happening in biblical and classical archaeology is part of a much wider symptom affecting all efforts to establish what counts as "knowledge," whether in the natural sciences or in the humanities."

So has biblical archaeology, even if more broadly conceived, come to an end? In this chapter, we: (1) explore the philosophical background of the debate about biblical history and archaeology and (2) examine the claims of William G. Dever, the most powerful voice against scholars that do not see much "history" in the Bible. In particular, we examine (a) the archaeological identification of Israelite culture and (b) the existence of an Israelite United Monarchy under David and Solomon. Dever believes these are two of the most persuasive cases in which archaeology helps establish the accuracy of biblical history.

Focus on William G. Dever is important for four reasons: First, his credentials as an archaeologist are beyond dispute. Second, he describes himself as "essentially a secular humanist," and so it is difficult to argue that he is proreligionist when he argues for the Bible's historicity. 'Z Third, he is the most active and competent voice against what is sometimes called the "minimalist"

position. Fourth, I interacted with William G. Dever and his methods while studying anthropology at the University of Arizona, and I started out sympathetic to his views. I would like to think, however, that a relatively dispassionate and rigorous comparison of evidence led me to conclude that he is incorrect about some of the major issues for which he is a primary advocate.

IS POSTMODERNISM THE PROBLEM?

At the heart of the entire debate about whether one can write a history of ancient Israel is an epistemological problem that is besetting all of archaeology and history. Historians and archaeologists have lost confidence in examining the past objectively.13 Some have attributed this decline in confidence to the rise of postmodernism, which is itself a complex phenomenon.14 However, in the case of biblical history, we begin with the remarks of JeanFrancois Lyotard, the man credited with pioneering the movement: "[S]implifying to the extreme, I define `postmodern' as incredulity toward metanarratives."'5

By "metanarratives," postmodernists refer to virtually any narrative that purports to describe the world, whether scientifically or historically. Such metanarratives are considered to be more the result of ideology and mechanisms to legitimize a favored version of a story than they are objective descriptions of reality. As it relates more specifically to history, Hayden White's Metahistory (1973) is usually considered a pioneering exposition of postmodernism. White believed that all historical narratives were basically discourses that could be studied on purely formal grounds. The reason to choose one type of discourse over another is ultimately aesthetic or moral. White also concluded that "there is no agreement over what will count as a specifically `historical' datum."16

MINIMALISTS AND MAXIMALISTS

In current debates about biblical archaeology, the supposed postmodernists are labeled "minimalists," "revisionists," or "nihilists" by Dever." These scholars include Philip Davies and Keith Whitelam of the University of Sheffield, England, and Niels Peter Lemche and Thomas L. Thompson of the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. They are known for their outspoken challenges to the existence of such biblical icons as David and Solomon. As Lemche and Thompson express it: "In the history of Palestine that we have presented, there is no room for a historical United Monarchy, or for such kings as those presented

in the biblical stories of Saul, David, and Solomon." 18

So what does "minimalism/postmodernism" mean for Dever? Dever summarizes the position thusly: "[T]here are no facts, only interpretations." 19 In another publication he offers this description: "The fundamental assumption of postmodernism is that no objective knowledge is possible, especially of a past that is only attested by texts."20 As we demonstrate below, the problem actually centers on an inconsistent categorization of what counts as a "fact," and we shall argue that many of Dever's objective "facts" quickly dissolve into interpretations, thus confirming Hayden White's assertion that there is no agreement on what constitutes a specifically historical "datum."

As is often the case in such polemics, each side does not necessarily accept the terms by which it is characterized. Philip Davies has written extensively on how the term "minimalist" is being misused by his opponents, and especially by Dever and Baruch Halpern, another vocal antiminimalist.21 In actuality, the nomenclature itself is flawed when describing the work of a T. L. Thompson or a W. G. Dever. For all the supposed differences between the "maximalists" and "minimalists," the irony is that even the maximalists are not so maximalist. In discussing which books can be utilized as witnesses for Israel's history, Dever states:

> With most scholars, I would exclude much of the Pentateuch, specifically the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. These materials obviously constitute a sort of "prehistory" that has been attached to the main epic of ancient Israel by late editors. All this may be distilled from long oral traditions, and I suspect that some of the stories-such as parts of the Patriarchal narratives-may once have had a real historical setting. These traditions, however, are overlaid with legendary and even fantastic materials that the modern reader may enjoy as "story," but which can scarcely be taken seriously as history.... Much of what is called in the English Bible "poetry," "wisdom," and "devotional literature" must also be eliminated from historical consideration.... Ruth, Esther, Job, and Daniel, historical novellae with contrived "real-life settings," the latter dating as late as the 2nd century B.C.22

In fact, this eliminates many important books in the Hebrew Bible. In essence, Dever believes that any history lies within the so-called

Deuteronomistic History (henceforth, DtrH), which stretches from Deuteronomy through 2 Kings (except Ruth) in Protestant Bibles. More specifically, it is 1 Kings and 2 Kings that, by Dever's own reckoning, provide "the best testcase" for establishing the most historically firm data .21

Certainly, this position, even as Dever himself concedes, should not be described as "maximalist."24 Indeed, if we used "maximalist" for the position of Dever, we would have no word to describe a scholar who accepts more of the Bible as historical, and there is a lot of literature that is still regarded as historical by academic scholars with more conservative views. Such scholars include Ian Provan and Kenneth Kitchen, among many others.25 Thus, we have chosen to use the word "quasiminimalist" for Dever, Halpern, and other scholars who do not accept much more history than the "minimalists," but who, nevertheless, see the DtrH as having the core of the historical materials.26

KNOWLEDGE, FACT, AND BELIEF

According to Dever, "By `fact' . . . we usually mean those discrete, irreducible, empirically observable things or events whose existence cannot be doubted by reasonable persons."27 Moreover, he tells us that "archaeologists ought rarely to use the word `proof' because the kind of verification that is possible in sciences that investigate the physical world is simply not obtainable for material-culture remains, even though they are also physical objects."28 Therefore, we may classify Dever's epistemology as a variant of the positivist tradition, something that he has asserted at various times, though he also has called himself a "neo-pragmatist."29

Yet when we excavate Dever's voluminous writings from the 1970s until the present, we discover that he is actually more of a postmodernist than he might admit, or that he really does not apply positivism very consistently.3o He uses words expressing the strongest sort of certainty, such as "prove," "confirm," "correctly," when a consistent application of positivism demands something less certain. Likewise, Dever often uses denotative statements (e.g., "X is Y"), which are also accorded the highest degree of certainty, when such statements of certainty are not warranted by the evidence. By describing wide degrees of certainty with expressions equal to the highest degree of certainty, he falls into the trap of postmodernism, if the latter involves the idea that anything is just as

true as anything else.

To understand this problem with Dever's epistemology, let's review briefly my specific version of positivism, especially as it applies to historical claims.31 My epistemology is a frankly presuppositional positivism, which avoids the objection that empiricorationalism (or logical positivism) would itself not satisfy its own requirements.32 This presupposition is stated as a conditional premise that begins with an all-important If clause:

If you assume that your five senses and logic provide reliable data about the world, then:

A. "Knowledge" refers only to those conclusions that have been verified directly by one or more of your five senses and/or logic. We regard "fact" as coterminous with "knowledge."33

B. `Belief' refers to any conclusion not verified by one or more of the five senses and/or logic. There are two types of beliefs:

   1. Reasonable beliefs are those that, while not directly verified, are at minimum based on verifiable entities and phenomena.

   2. Unreasonable beliefs are those that are not based on any verifiable entities or phenomena.

By "verified directly" we mean direct detection of the event, person, place, or thing in question by one or more of the five senses.

My version also demands a higher standard than that of a more classical positivist, such as Alfred J. Ayer, who is widely known for this definition of "know": "I conclude then that the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowing that something is the case are first that what one is said to know be true, secondly that one be sure of it, and thirdly that one should have the right to be sure."" Robert K. Shope, among others, has further reduced Ayer's definition to this schematic form:

"S knows p if and only if-

(i) p is true

(ii) S is sure that p is true, and

(iii) S has the right to be sure that p is true."35

Thus, what Ayer calls "knowledge" might fit into my B 1 category ("reasonable belief"), or his last condition ("right to be sure") can be interpreted to mean that only my "direct verification" satisfies that condition. Our variant also evades the famous "problems" announced by Edmund Gettier with variants of the "justified true belief' criteria of "knowing."36

But regardless of which of these variants of positivism we accept, they lead to the conclusion that minimalism is the most proper approach to ancient history. Minimalism here means a historical approach that refuses to call anything a "fact" or "knowledge" without direct verification. My particular version would also eliminate many of the problems caused by archaeologists who insist on using "know" for conclusions that do not merit such a high expression of certainty.37

DEVER AND WINDSCHUTTLE

In order to illustrate how Dever misidentifies the source of the problem as postmodernism rather than as the faulty application of the positivist method to which he claims to subscribe, let us examine more closely one of Dever's favorite historians, Keith Windschuttle, author of The Killing of History, which Dever believes presents "devastating case-studies in postmodern historiography."38 Among Windschuttle's targets are Hayden White, Michel Foucault, and Simon Schama.

Windschuttle does indeed make a compelling case that much of what passes for postmodernist scholarship is self-refuting and shoddy. His main arguments against radical skepticism are actually quite ancient, but still effective.39 In brief, he notes that denials of the validity of empiricorationalist history, which he favors, usually involve empiricorationalist assertions. That is to say, those that deny that the senses or logic are at all reliable are themselves using their senses and logic to make that assertion. But one cannot refute empiricorationalism by using empiricorationalism, as its very use acknowledges its validity. As such, the statement that nothing can be known, or that anything is just as true as anything else, results in a case of self-referential incoherence.40

Likewise, theories of science that deny the validity of all inductive approaches to science are themselves engaging in an inductive rationale. In general, induction asserts that one can formulate generalized statements or principles from a sufficient number of examples. The sun will rise in the east tomorrow is a statement made on the basis of past experience. David Hume, of course, pointed out that inductive statements are not necessarily or logically true.41 There is no logical reason why the sun should rise in the east the next time. However, those that object to induction are themselves using induction, for in asserting that no general statements can be made, they are themselves making a generalized statement.

However, Windschuttle's own application of empiricorationalist history also shows why postmodernists have been able to make the advances they have. Both Windschuttle and Dever are postmodernists themselves, if postmodernism includes the idea that anything is just as true as anything else. Windschuttle, more specifically, fails to see the difference between reasonable and unreasonable beliefs as outlined above.

Indeed, in arguing against the proposition that "nothing is certain," Windschuttle states that "know" represents a "success-word," and "belief' is a "non-success word" when it comes to determining truth.42 So, for Windschuttle, there are only two categories, (1) knowledge and (2) belief. More importantly, Windschuttle says, "[S]ince beliefs do not have to be true, one systematic belief is as good as any other."" Thus, "belief' becomes a single category instead of our two subcategories of belief: (1) reasonable and (2) unreasonable.

By not differentiating between unreasonable and reasonable "belief," Windschuttle is left only with the word "know" (and its synonyms) to privilege statements with still very diverse degrees of certainty. But privileging a wide degree of certainty with the word "know" or "knowledge" becomes another version of postmodernist relativism itself. Consider this statement from Windschuttle about the assassination of Julius Caesar.

> When historians accept observations about the past as evidence that an event really happened, they are always reluctant to take one report as proof of this. They prefer the corroboration of observations from many observers. This is what they have with the death of Julius Caesar. Every report they have ever seen about the Roman Empire around 44 BC, no

> matter how close or how removed the source, corroborates the assassination and not one has yet turned up to falsify or even raise doubts about whether the event occurred.... We know that Julius Caesar was killed in Rome in 44 BC just as surely as we know that John F. Kennedy was killed in Dallas in 1963.44

Windschuttle's phrase "just as surely as we know" treats Julius Caesar's assassination and Kennedy's assassination as equally certain and "known."

My version of positivism dictates that we express the claim more accurately as "we reasonably believe that Julius Caesar was killed in Rome in 44 BCE." We, indeed, cannot verify such an occurrence ourselves directly and so we cannot claim to "know" it occurred. In fact, the Kennedy assassination shows how difficult it is to know much more than that he was killed that day. Nonetheless, the difference in data between the assassinations of Kennedy and Caesar is so vast that it would really be more relativistic to use the word "know" in both cases. Thus, at least in the cases of Caesar and Kennedy, Windschuttle is closer to the postmodernist claim that one conclusion is just as true as another.

Note that in the case of Caesar's assassination, the supposed "corroboration from many observers" to which Windschuttle refers is neither qualitatively nor quantitatively even similar to that available for the Kennedy assassination. In fact, Windschuttle never even provides a single source that he thinks corroborates the statement: "Julius Caesar was killed in Rome in 44 BC." To declare such a statement as true under a positivist stance, we need to decompose it into substatements, each of which we would need to verify: (1) The existence of the subject of the statement (Julius Caesar); (2) the event experienced by the subject (Julius killed, as opposed to experiencing some other manner of death); (3) location of the event (Rome, and not some other place); and (4) time of the event (44 BCE as opposed to, let's say, 43 BCE or 45 BCE).45

As Windschuttle notes with disapproval, Karl Popper has argued that verifying such a historical event is impossible because verification would require an infinite regress of claims and sources.46 For example, to verify the existence of Julius Caesar, one would be depending on Source X.47 But then we need to verify that source X knew anything about Caesar. That would mean that now we would have to verify the reliability of source X, which would involve establishing the existence of the author of source X. That, in turn, would

necessitate a source Y to tell us about the existence of the author of Source X. But Source Y would require similar verification. Popper's observations support further the notion that using "know" is inappropriate to describe anything done by or to Caesar, and that the best we could ever do is establish some reasonable belief.

Otherwise, Windschuttle's definition of "observers" seems arbitrary and meaningless as it pertains to Caesar's assassination. As Michael Parenti notes, "[W]e have no surviving eyewitness reports of Caesar's assassination."48 The main sources for the claim of Caesar's assassination include the Greco-Roman authors Suetonius and Plutarch. Neither of these were present or claim to have been present at the event, and so they cannot properly be termed "observers."

In the case of Kennedy's assassination, in contrast, we possess a famous film of the event by Abraham Zapruder. Assuming it is authentic, that film indicates that there were observers who could subsequently be questioned, including the survivors, Texas governor John B. Connally (1917-1993) and Jacqueline Kennedy (1929-1994). Despite the problems that have been duly noted with eyewitness testimony, we can be reasonably certain that some of the participants do at least describe themselves as "observers" of the Kennedy event.49 We have no such certainty in the case of Caesar.

Windschuttle complains that Popper's approach would lead us to conclude that any witness to the Kennedy assassination "must be regarded as unreliable."50 My own positivistic approach requires that we regard a witness as reliable when the reliability has been verified. That is to say, we cannot say that "we know X is reliable" until we have verified the truth of that statement. In my positivist procedure, we also need to verify that someone identifying him or herself as a witness is such a thing in the first place, and this is standard procedure in any courtroom that uses empiricorationalist methodology.

In addition, there are still millions of living witnesses to testify that at least the television reports of the Kennedy assassination do date to November 22, 1963. I, for one, have a memory of this event, as young as I was. I can say that I have directly verified that on November 22, 1963, I heard reports of the assassination of President Kennedy. I cannot say the same for Caesar, and so it would be absurd to say that "I know" what happened in 44 BCE "just as surely as I know" what happened on November 22, 1963.

When we examine more closely the sources we do have for the assassination of Caesar, they do not even approximate what we have for the Kennedy event. Consider Suetonius, whose Lives of the Caesars are often used as main sources for the story.51 Suetonius claims that the part of the story just prior to the assassination relies on Cornelius Balbus, "an intimate friend of Caesar" (familiarissimus Caesaris), but Suetonius does not claim that Cornelius was present at the assassination itself.52 Historians usually date Suetonius to 75-130 CE, and so he was writing at least a hundred years after the event. Therefore, it is difficult to understand how Suetonius could have verified who was an eyewitness and who was not.

Despite his relative rehabilitation as a Roman source in the last couple of decades, Suetonius bears a lot of problems that defy resolution.53 Worse yet, the actual copies (manuscripts) of his "report" are of medieval date, with the oldest extant manuscript, called the Codex Memmianus, dating to around 820 CE.54 Thus, Windschuttle asks us to trust reports that are actually about a thousand years after the event. Given that in the case of the Arthurian materials (discussed later in this chapter) we have empirical proof that complex narratives can arise in short spans of time, manuscripts that are removed hun dreds of years from the events can hardly be compared to data we have about the Kennedy assassination.

If we were to consider the earliest actual copy of any report, we might consult the Res Gestae of Augustus Caesar (emperor, 27 BCE-14 CE), the adopted son and successor of Julius Caesar. The Res Gestae provides a record, purporting to be written by Augustus himself, of that emperor's achievements. Therein he says that "I drove into exile the murderers of my father, avenging their crime through tribunals established by law."55 Yet that only tells us Augustus's side of the story. No year is given. No names are provided. What if such accusations of murder were a way to get rivals out of the way? Who exactly witnessed this event?56 We have nothing from the supposed murderers themselves, and so no court in America would allow such a statement to convict anyone.

While Windschuttle complains that the postmodernists appeal to ideology and motives, there seems to be no shortage of ideological analysis of postmodernists.57 Regarding postmodernists he says, "[B]y trying to eliminate the truth content of words such as `know,' `fact' and `proof,' and 'discover,' they are all involved in an arrogant but tawdry attempt to change the meaning of the

language for no better reason than to shore up their own misconceived and otherwise self-contradictory theories."58 In other words, Windschuttle uses the same hermeneutics of "suspicion" he denounces when used by postmodernists. Otherwise, Windschuttle wants to privilege the claims he makes with the words "know" and "fact."

More problematic is that Windschuttle's own objections to the techniques of some modem historians would result in skepticism toward the very sources on which we depend for our "knowledge" of Julius Caesar's assassination in 44 BCE. In his critique of Dead Certainties, a book about a famous murder case at Harvard Medical School, Windschuttle chides the famed author Simon Schama for admitting to the use of fictional dialogues, among other devices, in his narrative.59 Windschuttle concludes:

> However, once some of a book of history is discovered to be fabricated, the reader can never be sure that it is not all made up. Under these conditions, how could we have any confidence that the composite version itself is at all accurate or authentic? When a writer presents what he or she says is history, then the reader takes it on faith that the writer is at least trying to tell the truth.bo

Were we to apply this criterion to our Roman sources, we could also be justified in being skeptical of what those authors are saying. Moreover, Wind schuttle admits that claiming to be an eyewitness, as Schama does, does not make one an eyewitness. Reading a report that claims to be historical ultimately requires "faith," as Windschuttle himself admits.

Historians of the Roman period routinely accused earlier historians of engaging in lying and rhetorical artifice, which may be justly compared to what Schama has done. Thus, Josephus, at the beginning of his account of the Wars of the Jews, states:

> Of these [previous writers], however, some having taken no part in the action, have collected from hearsay casual and contradictory stories which they have then edited in a rhetorical style; while others who have witnessed the events have, either from flattery of the Romans or from hatred of the Jews, misrepresented the facts, their writing exhibiting alternatively invective and encomium, but nowhere historical

accuracy.61

Consider also the case of Plutarch (46-127), the Greek historian, whose biography, titled Caesar, forms another of the most quoted sources for the assassination story. Plutarch has a separate biography, titled Brutus, for one of the alleged conspirators.62 However, these two biographies don't always agree on important details. In Caesar (66.4), Plutarch says that a man named Decimus Brutus Albinus delayed Antony's entrance into the senate-house, where the assassination is said to have taken place. But in Brutus (17.2), Plutarch says it was a man named Trebonius who detained Antony.

According to C. B. R. Pelling, who is a meticulous empiricist, "It is possible that Plutarch has deliberately distorted the narrative in Caesar by transferring the act to D. Brutus: such techniques are not unknown in his work."63 Pelling presents examples where Plutarch provides contradictory dates for events, as well as cases where Plutarch attributes speeches to Antony and Cassius that were attributed to Caesar in other passages. So if we use Windschuttle's rule that we should doubt all of a book when even "some of the book" can be shown to be manufactured or untruthful, then his own conclusion that "we know" what Plutarch and other Roman writers report about Caesar's assassination should be thrown into question.

Of course, all this also has implications for Dever's confidence in the DtrH, which he believes bears stories in which historians can have the most confidence. For it has long been noted, including by Dever himself, that the author(s) of the DtrH attribute long and curiously similar speeches to Moses, Samuel, and other figures.64 Such speeches are regarded by most biblical scholars to be just as fictitious and manufactured as those by Schama, except that the latter is simply more explicit about what he was doing. If we apply the same set of rules to DtrH, then minimalists are justified to be just as skeptical toward that work as Windschuttle is toward Schama.

DEVER GOES TO POTS

The problems with Dever's inconsistent application of positivistic history can be seen in the current debate about whether we can detect an ethnic group called Israel through archaeological remains.65 For Dever, this is a prime test case for which he believes there is "convergence" between the biblical record and

material remains. The idea of convergence is one of the most important criteria that Dever cites. As he phrases it, "Whenever the two sources or 'witnesses' happen to converge in their testimony, a historical `datum' (or given) may be said to have been established beyond reasonable doubt."66

Recall that Hayden White, whose work Dever sees as part of the problem, argues that "there is no agreement over what will count as a specifically `historical' datum." 67 Here we show that Dever proves Hayden White correct. Examining this test case is also important because Dever complains that Philip Davies's review of his book (What Did the Biblical Writers Know?) "does not confront a single one of the dozens of `convergences' between texts and artifacts that I document."68

Dever, in particular, believes that settlements in the highlands of Israel, and especially those built de novo (with no preceding settlement) in the early Iron Age (ca. 1200 BCE), should be identified as Israelite or proto-Israelite. The area designated as the higlands of Israel refers roughly to a hilly spine that runs north to south, and encompasses Jerusalem, Shechem, and Samaria (for a map, see figure 3). Dever specifically argues against those who wish to use a more neutral term such as "the early Iron Age hill-country settlers."69 This insistence on the term "proto-Israelite" contradicts a seemingly casual remark in a previous article, wherein he declared, "[W]e have spoken much too confidently of `Israelite' material culture, and we must now begin to explore more systematically the archaeological components of this designation."70

In order to identify the "Israelite" ethnic group represented by those material remains in the highlands, Dever appeals to the Merneptah Stele, which is usually regarded as having the earliest known mention of anything called "Israel" outside of the Bible. The Merneptah Stele is an inscribed monument, dated to around 1210 BCE, and named for the Pharaoh, whose victories are commemorated on that monument." We can agree that the term "Israel" designates a group rather than a city-state or a kingdom. Thus, it is reasonable to believe that extrabiblical evidence indicates the existence of some entity that the Egyptians call "Israel."

However, one cannot then use this "fact" to argue, as Dever does, that "[t]here does exist in Canaan a people calling themselves `Israel' and thus called `Israel' by the Egyptians."72 The Merneptah Stele does not say that anyone in

Canaan called themselves "Israel." The Merneptah Stele only shows that the Egyptian author used the name "Israel" for some entity in what may now be called Israel or Jordan or the vicinity.

This qualification is not simply a case of pedantry because it is also a fact, now amassed by numerous studies of ethnogenesis (the construction of ethnic identities), that conquerors may apply names and categorizations to conquered peoples that the latter don't apply to themselves. One very wellknown example today is "Indian" as applied to the indigenous peoples of the Americas. That is not a term that indigenous people used for themselves at the time of the initial contact. Such a term was imposed on these people, and eventually was accepted as a selfdesignation.

Similarly, if one reads reports of the encounters between the Romans and the Picts of Britain, one also realizes that "Pict" probably is not a selfdesignation for one of the groups living in Britain. Rather, "Pict" derives from a Latin word, cognate with our own English "picture" or "depiction." The Romans may have applied the term to people wearing some sort of tattoo or decoration.73 There is no evidence that the Picts called themselves that prior to the arrival of the Romans.74 And such identifications were made despite the supposed great knowledge of geography possessed by the Romans. In addition, there is much new research on the role of imaginary landscapes in ancient literature.75

Dever's facile use of the Merneptah Stele is complicated by the fact that the same Stele also mentions Canaan. Yet Dever claims that "Israel" was distinct "in the minds of the Egyptians from the Canaanites."76 But why can't the Egyptians think that Israel was "part of rather than "distinct from" the Canaanites? Why can't we denominate all the highland villages as "Canaanite" rather than "Israelite" on the basis of the Merneptah Stele? Ironically, Anson Rainey, an enemy of minimalists, excoriates Dever for not realizing that "Israel" in the Merneptah Stele refers to an entity living in the steppes of Transjordan rather than in the highlands west of the Jordan River.77

My point is not so much that something called Israel does not exist around 1200-1000 BCE, but rather that I object to Dever's insistence that the Merneptah Stele justifies only "Israel" or "proto-Israelite" for the culture of the highlands. To eliminate, among other groups, the Canaanites, Hittites, and Hivites as contenders for the privileged title of the people of the highlands, Dever resorts to

the argument that the groups the Bible mentions as living in the highlands must be an ideological or literary construct of the biblical authors. As Dever phrases it, "But it is clear that all these groups are used mostly as foils for their story of Israelite conquest and annihilation, which as we have seen scarcely describes the actual ethnic situation in Canaan.""

But if these texts do not describe the "actual ethnic situation in Canaan," then this undermines his entire "Israelite" case, which is premised on the idea that the biblical sources are describing "the actual ethnic situation." And, by this logic, why can't it be that "Israelite" is also a construct of biblical authors for some political purpose? Why is it only the non-Israelite groups who bear a "literary" rather than a historical role in stories?

To support his case on archaeological grounds, Dever appeals to parallels between the material remains found in those hill settlements and the lifestyle of the corresponding inhabitants as described in the books of Judges and Samuel, in particular. He describes some ten features where archaeological testimony "converges" with biblical testimony. Here are some examples adapted from his summary of the twelfth to eleventh centuries BCE:79

Biblical texts	**Archaeological data**
The "Israelites" constitute an "ethnic" minority but complex process of working out an identity underway.	The village complex is relatively isolated self-sufficient economically; house-form, ceramic repertoire, few cult sites all indicate some continuities with but increasing diversion from LB Canaanite culture.

The problem with this particular "convergence" is that it does not accord with the biblical texts very well. First, the book of Judges repeatedly tells us that the Israelites freely lived among and mixed with what the biblical author calls "Canaanite peoples." Note Judges 3:5-7:

So the people of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the

> Amorites, the Per'izzites, the Hivites, and the Jeb'usites; and they took their daughters to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons; and they served their gods. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, forgetting the LORD their God, and serving the Ba'als and the Ashe'roth.

If the Israelites constitute an "ethnic minority," then why insist on the term "Israelite" for the material culture, especially since at other times Dever recognizes that this area is a "`multi-ethnic' society."80 Why not call it Canaanite, the presumed majority culture? Furthermore, if the Israelites are mixing with other inhabitants and even intermarrying with them, then can we really expect such mixed households to have different pottery depending on which groups are represented?

In fact, Dever agrees with Israel Finkelstein, who has conducted the most important survey of these highland villages, in viewing the material culture of the highlands as quite homogeneous from the Late Bronze Age to the early Iron Age.81 If it is so homogeneous, then why can't we interchange the names? Why not call that material culture Perizzite or Hittite? In fact, the name "Hittite" is itself another example of how dangerous it is to simply assume that an ethnicon used by one group is also a selfdesignation. For the Hittites described in the Bible (e.g., Genesis 23:3-5) bear little or no resemblance to the "Hittites" who had an important empire in what is now Turkey.82

And the homogeneity of the material culture also does not necessarily accord with Dever's notion of a "complex process of working out an identity." If the material culture reflected such an ethnic process, then we reasonably should expect an initial diverse ceramic repertory to become more homogeneous in order to mirror an increasingly distinct ethnic identity.

In fact, what we witness, and what Dever acknowledges, is "continuities in material culture from Iron I into Iron II, or the period of the Israelite Monarchy."83 Gabriel Barkay, a prominent Israeli archaeologist, remarks that the distinction between the tenth and ninth centuries "is based mainly on historical considerations, and the biblical record emphasizes the difference between the days of the United Monarchy and the period of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The material culture, however, exhibits considerable continuity between the two centuries."84 Given such continuity,

how does the material culture reflect an increasing discontinuity in ethnic identity for the Israelites relative to other people living in the area? Indeed, Dever holds contradictory positions on the ethnic homogeneity reflected in the material culture.85

Moreover, and as Dever himself notes, any increasing homogeneity can be attributed to standardization of new technology (e.g., more wheel-made pottery as opposed to handmade pottery).86 At the same time, Dever speaks of the "proliferation of imported wares" in the Iron II, but he does not seem to see that as reflecting ethnic diversification or as constituting less homogeneity.87 In sum, Dever does not offer "facts" but rather a confusing morass of interpretations of ceramic continuities and discontinuities.

In addition, Dever seems to ignore some of the theoreticians that he says represent his current approach to archaeology. In particular, he praises the work of Ian Hodder, who has reacted against what is called processualist archaeology.88 Processualists seek to explain material objects on a more scientific basis (e.g., formulating hypothesis that can be tested against the data).89 A major assumption is that material objects reflect all types of cultural subsystems, ranging from subsistence to ethnic behavior.90

Hodder advocates a "contextual" approach that centers on "reading" artifacts as texts. Dever, in fact, claims that by 1993 he had recognized that the postprocessualist "trend augured well for us since it made history-writing respectable once again."91 But Hodder himself cautions against seeing material artifacts as a reflection of behavior. Material objects don't simply reflect behavior but they also affect behavior. Hodder illustrates this with his work on the Baringo people of Kenya. Some Baringo objects may signal social boundaries, but other objects, such as spears, do not.92

Overall, Dever's capricious treatment of the biblical text mirrors what he says he abhors about the minimalists. As Dever phrases it, "How is it that the biblical texts are always approached with postmodernism's typical `hermeneutics of suspicion,' but the nonbiblical texts are taken at face value? It seems to be that the Bible is automatically held guilty unless proven innocent."93 Yet his own argument also does not take the text at face value insofar as he does not duly represent the type of ethnic mixture that the text insists was a continual phenomenon.

Moreover, his complaint about the Bible being held guilty before being proven innocent harks back to a very long tradition of fundamentalist Christian apologetic rhetoric. Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, two of the staunchest self-described fundamentalist apologists today, echo Dever's complaint well: "Many critics assume the Bible is wrong until something proves it right."94 Geisler and Howe dub it "Mistake 2" in a list of mistakes made by skeptics of the Bible. So even if I do not believe Dever is a fundamentalist, his logic here is flawed insofar as one could argue that he also does not hold the biblical text to be "innocent" or, in this case, accurately representative of the ethnic mixture.

Another "convergence" reverts to the inconsistent use of "Canaanite" as follows:`

Biblical texts	Archaeological data
Scant literature, but “early poems” reflect some oral traditions; “Shibbolet/ Sibbolet” story indicates local dialect; no “national” language and script yet	A few inscriptions in old Canaanite script, including an abecedary; personal names that will appear in later Hebrew

Yet this convergence does nothing to resolve the question of whether the material remains should be called "Israelite" and not "Canaanite." Dever's admission that the actual material culture consists of inscriptions in Canaanite (not Hebrew) actually would support a "Canaanite" designation more than an Israelite designation at this point. Indeed, we really do not have evidence of what Hebrew was like in the Iron I period because the first evidence of the Hebrew language, the so-called Gezer Calendar, dates to the tenth century, and it can be disputed whether it is in Hebrew or Phoenician.96

The whole argument of what an ethnic group is overlooks a lot of new research and empirical data on the fluidity of ethnic terms.97 In fact, one of the examples cited by Dever is specifically contradicted by the biblical record. In order to show that ethnic groups do have common features, he cites this example: "The Jewish community-surely as diverse as any in the world, but no less an ethnic group-understand all this instinctively. At Passover, Jews all over

the world solemnly commemorate the Exodus story by reciting: `It is as though we had come out of Egypt this night.'"98

Dever's use of "instinctively" to refer to a Jewish practice resorts to an essentialist and primordialist view of identity that can be easily refuted.99 According to 2 Kings 23:21-23, it is the Passover celebration that was not observed for hundreds of years in ancient Israel:

> And the king commanded all the people, "Keep the passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this book of the covenant." For no such passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, or during all the days of the kings of Israel or of the kings of Judah; but in the eighteenth year of King Josi'ah this passover was kept to the LORD in Jerusalem.

If the Passover is a fundamental and "instinctive" feature of Jewish ethnicity, then were there no Jews between the period of the Judges and Josiah?

As Dever has argued, even the worship of Yahweh cannot be seen as an ethnic marker because the biblical record tells us that Yahweh worshipers could become Baal worshipers and vice versa. Uriah is called a Hittite, despite the fact that 2 Samuel 11:3-11 acknowledges that Uriah was more faithful to Yahwism than King David, the paradigm of Israelite identity. Were their ethnicities changing?

All of these questionable assumptions bring us to the social death of biblical archaeology, which is evidenced by the bitter polemics that permeate discussion of these questions. And Dever has been quite contumacious and patronizing in his language toward those who disagree with him on a number of issues. Concerning Finkelstein's shift away from seeing "Israelite" identity in the material culture of the Iron I, Dever engages in the hermeneutics of suspicion, remarking, "I fear that in this case Finkelstein has changed his mind not on the basis of any empirical data, but simply out of an inherent iconoclasm, evident in much of his writing, as well as a sense of `political correctness.'"100 There is something terribly amiss in a profession that cannot settle arguments by much beyond psychoanalysis of opponents.

In sum, the idea that material remains can tell us the ethnicity of Israelites is

a colossal failure. The empirical data support any number of ethnic identifications. The selection of "Israelite" for the culture of the highlands must rest on other than empirical "facts." In this case, Dever's so-called facts are interpretations, just as Hayden White has alleged. While Dever inveighs against the idea that much of Israelite history is a modern social construct, he proves that his view of material culture of the highlands is a social construct of his own. He has chosen to identify the material remains as "Israelite" on the basis of his own social history rather because the material culture allegedly speaks for itself.

TEL DAN ABOUT DAVID?

In 1993, there was a sensational find published by Avraham Biran, the respected excavator of Tel Dan, a site in northern Israel.10' The find at issue is an inscription, written in Aramaic and now known as the Tel Dan Inscription, which contains a phrase that could be transcribed as bytdwd (717n):1). The excavators translated that phrase as "the House of David." The Tel Dan Inscription, two other fragments of which were discovered in 1994, was immediately regarded as confirmation that David was a real historical figure.102 Moreover, another line (8) in the inscription reads, mlk.ysr'l which may be translated plausibly as "king of Israel," although it is referring to a king other than David.

Many of the minimalists argued that the inscription was either being misinterpreted or was an outright forgery. Among those who suggested some level of forgery was Thomas L. Thompson, the archnemesis of Dever. Thompson complained that insofar as the archaeological context and actual find spot were concerned, "Biran gave two different descriptions of it in a single article, but both the alleged placement in the wall and its relationship to Tel Dan's stratigraphy and pottery chronology were suspect." 103

For our purposes, however, we will assume that the inscription is authentic. Let us consider at least two claims by Dever, who says the inscription is "now confidently dated by additional fragments to the reign of Joram ('Jehoram') of Judah, who ruled ca. 847-842."104 For this conclusion he cites line 8 of the inscription, which also assumes that the fragments should be positioned together where they are by the excavators. However, Jehoram does not appear in line 8 at all. The name has been inserted in a transliteration and completely enclosed in

brackets by the editor, thus indicating that it is not actually present in the surviving inscription.

Where it might be present is in line 7, but this is also uncertain because all we have left to reconstruct any name are two letters that we may transcribe as RM (b7). It is from these two letters that some scholars then conclude that it is Jehoram (or Joram). The problem is that there are plenty of other figures whose names end in RM, who can also be placed in this inscription, as for example:'os

ADNY-RM	=	Adoniram
AHY-RM	=	Ahiram
AB-RM	=	Abram
ABI-RM	=	Abiram
HY-RM	=	Hiram
MLKY-RM	=	Malkiram

As noted by K. L. Noll, Hiram (tr1n), the king of Tyre (1 Kings 5:1), is just as good a possibility.106 Jehoram was chosen because he is a king that would fit the period to which Biran has assigned the inscription. Since Biran believes it is ninth century, he looked for Israelite kings in that time period. This is not an unreasonable procedure, except that it is circular and would not qualify as a case where the archaeology is speaking for itself.

What is not often divulged to the public is that the inscription contradicts biblical history, at least as reconstructed by Biran. Dever admits:

> It must be cautioned, however, that the Tel Dan inscription cannot be taken simply as confirmation of the biblical accounts of Aramaean contacts, since it supplies new information that seems to differ with the biblical

But what one might characterize as "differ" another scholar might rightfully call "contradict." In the case of the Tel Dan Inscription, the reconstruction accepted by Dever asserts that the Aramean king killed Jehoram, whereas the biblical record said it was Jehu who killed Jehoram (2 Kings 9:24).

The phrase bytdwd also has received varying interpretations.108 Some scholars note that the word is treated as a single word, whereas the words

translated as "house of/dynasty of' and "David" should be separated by a dot if they were considered different words. The inscription does separate other words with dots (note dot in mlk.ysr'l, "king of Israel" above). However, many scholars point out that there are many other cases where a similar phrase is treated as one word.

But even if dwd were a separate word, there is still debate about what "House of dwd" means because dwd might refer to the temple or palace of a person, place, or god. It is also plausible to interpret "house" as "dynasty" and so we would have the "dynasty of David" attested in the archaeological record. As we will show in our upcoming discussion of the archaeology of King Arthur, even if such an inscription could be read as "dynasty of David," then such an inscription would not "prove" the existence of a kingdom of David, a city of David, or any other such entity.

Dever's exasperation with the minimalists leads him to argue that the minimalists are absurd in always requiring extrabiblical confirmation for anything reported in the Bible before declaring it historical. Dever's accusatory description of minimalist historiography is that "[o]ne witness is no witness."109 Yet Dever's protest contradicts Windschuttle's preference for more than one witness (see above) and Dever's own criterion outlined earlier: "Whenever the two sources or `witnesses' happen to converge in their testimony, a historical "datum' (or given) may be said to have been established beyond reasonable doubt."110 Here, Dever himself implies that one witness would not be sufficient to constitute a "historical `datum.'"

Naive utilitarianism seems to be another defense used to refute the insistence on extrabiblical corroboration as a minimum to establish something as a reasonable historical datum. By naive utilitarianism, I refer to the rationale that may be expressed as "X is necessary to maintain our confidence in entity or event Y, therefore X must exist." For example, Dever thinks it near criminal to allege that Jesus might not have existed because there is no evidence for his existence in the first century."' The apparent rationale is: "Since we need to maintain confidence in the historical consensus that Jesus existed in the first century, then we should allow that to be called a historical fact." Clearly, such naive utilitarianism is just as flawed as any postmodernism."2

In any case, the most we can say, until further evidence is forthcoming, is

that the Tel Dan Inscription, assuming it is authentic, confirms the existence of a "king of Israel," though which one is still uncertain. The existence of kings of Israel, if that means the "northern kingdom" centered at Samaria, was already known from Assyrian and other sources. It is reasonable to believe that bytdwd may be a reference to a person, eponym, god, place, or the dynasty of David. Both the minimalists and quasiminimalists would do well to suspend judgment until more definitive evidence is forthcoming.

SOLOMON AND BILL'S GATES

Architecture has figured prominently in efforts to identify Solomonic activity in the archaeological record. For the quasiminimalists, these kings are supposed to have lived in the tenth century BCE, and they are supposed to have ruled Israel in a relatively "united monarchy" that encompassed a southern area known as Judah, and a northern area known as either "Northern Israel," or just as "Israel," after the split of the united monarchy. According to 1 Kings 12, this split occurred after the death of Solomon when his son, Rehoboam, was accused of abusing his powers. Most scholars usually date the split to around 925 BCE.

As in the case of the patriarchs, there is no independent and contemporary textual evidence for the existence of a David or a Solomon. This is odd, given the following statement about the size of Solomon's empire in 1 Kings 4:24-26:

> For he had dominion over all the region west of the Euphra'tes from Tiphsah to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphra'tes; and he had peace on all sides round about him. And Judah and Israel dwelt in safety, from Dan even to Beer-Sheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon. Solomon also had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.

Yet no other contemporary king knows of Solomon insofar as the texts we now have are concerned. We have letters between kings as far from each other as Egypt and Mesopotamia (in Iraq), but none between Solomon and even his closest neighbors. No tribute lists. No notices of anything being sent to or from Solomon. This silence is so deafening that even Dever and most scholars today acknowledge that the biblical report of the size and glory of Solomon's empire is an exaggeration.13

Nonetheless, on the basis of "convergence" between archaeology and biblical testimony Dever claims that among the most certain conclusions we can reach is that the Solomonic kingdom existed. To understand why Dever espouses this idea, let's begin with 1 Kings 9:15-19, the biblical text at issue:

> And this is the account of the forced labor which King Solomon levied to build the house of the LORD and his own house and the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem and Hazor and Megid'do and Gezer (Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burnt it with fire, and had slain the Canaanites who dwelt in the city, and had given it as dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife; so Solomon rebuilt Gezer) and Lower Beth-hor'on and Ba'alath and Tamar in the wilderness, in the land of Judah, and all the storecities that Solomon had, and the cities for his chariots, and the cities for his horsemen, and whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.

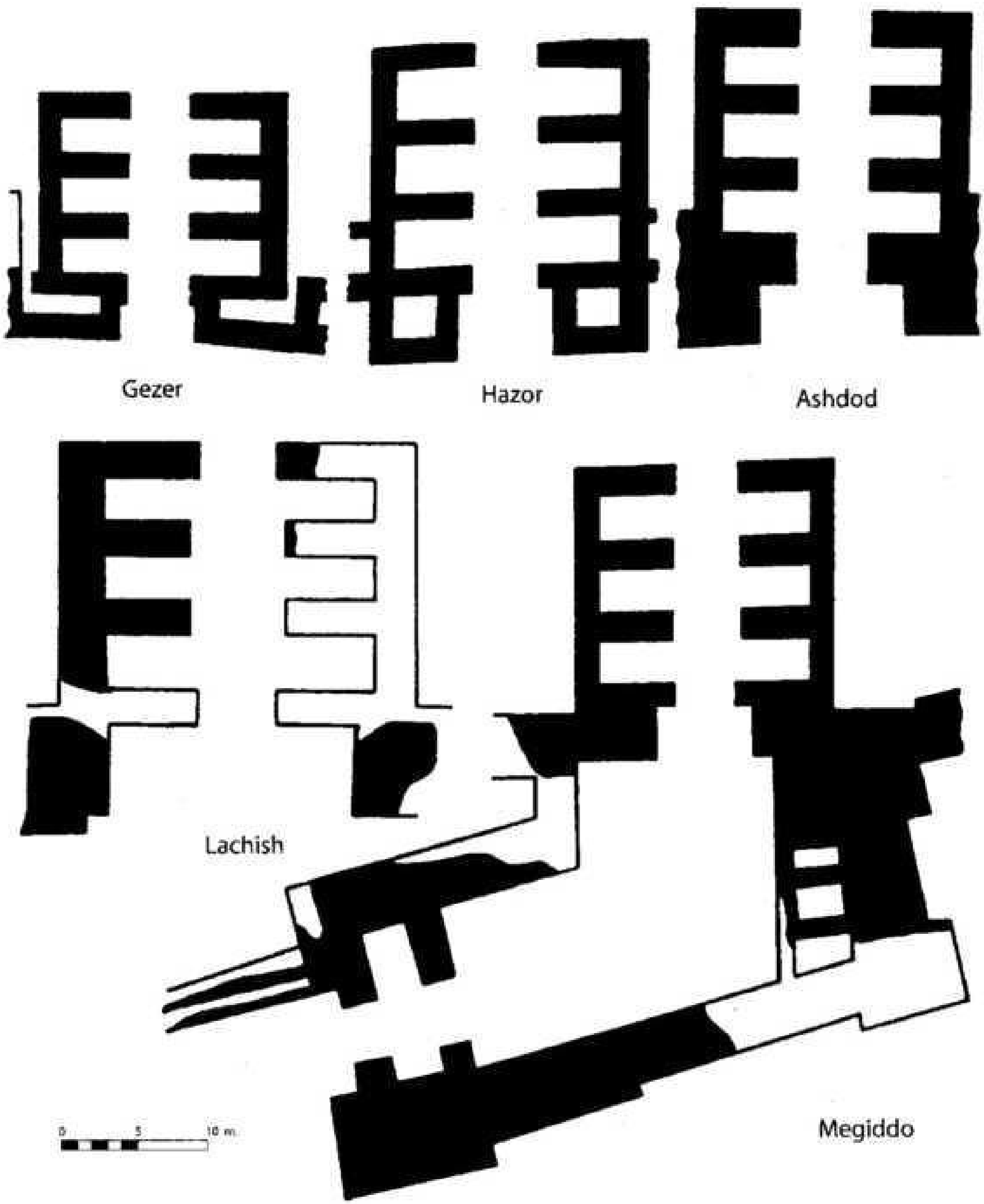
On a more specific level, the historical claim at issue is Solomon's building activity at the places called Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. Gates, each with four successive entries and six side chambers, were discovered at these places in the twentieth century. In 1990, Dever concluded his discussion of these gates as follows:

> Thus, the parallels between the three Solomonic gates alluded to in 1 Kings 9 and those brought to light by excavations are so close that we must posit royal supervision in the construction of fortified provincial administrative centers in the tenth century B.C. Here is a rare, dramatic instance of archaeology turning up actual structures mentioned specifically in the Bible.114

Dever himself had completed the excavation (1967-1971) of Gezer's gate, which was attached to a casemate wall. A casemate wall consists of parallel walls with partitions that form a series of hollow squares filled with rubble. A casemate wall was also found attached to the gate at Hazor, which was excavated by the famous archaeologist Yigael Yadin. Yigael Yadin, furthermore, went to Megiddo, where he believed he had found yet another casemate wall that could be linked to the four-entry gate there. Dever claimed that Yadin's soundings had "proved" a correspondence to the Solomonic gate.' 11 Thus, you had gates with four entries, six chambers, and attached to casemate walls at the

same three places mentioned as being constructed by one man, Solomon (see figure 1).

Figure 1: The plan of the four-entry gates from various sites in ancient Palestine. Based on his interpretation of 1 Kings 9:15, William G. Dever argued that the gates at Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo were built by Solomon in the tenth century BCE (William G. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001], p. 132).



In addition, pottery found there all could be dated to the tenth century. At Gezer, Dever states that the pottery from the principal destruction layers "included distinctive forms of red-slipped and slipped and hand-burnished (polished) pottery, which have always been dated to the late tenth century. The equally distinctive wheel-burnished pottery characteristic of the early 9th century at all known sites was conspicuously absent."' 16 Dever is emphatic that

his tenth century BCE date for the Gezer gate is "on commonly accepted ceramic grounds-not on a naive acceptance of the Bible's stories about `Solomon in all his glory."""" He concludes that "[i]f the biblical Solomon had not constructed the Gezer gate and city walls, then we would have to invent a similar king by another name." 18

Megiddo's gate was not so simple to date. One problem is that excavations and the stratigraphy there had a very muddled history. The first excavations, between 1903 and 1905, were conducted by Gottlieb Schumacher, a German archaeologist, but not all records survived. The excavations (1925-1939) conducted by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago had their own problems, which are still generating personal animosity among archaeologists. 119

Eventually, a layer called VA-IVB was identified as the "Solomonic" stratum. The layer previously had been seen as separate layers. G. Ernest Wright proposed that these layers were contemporaneous, and so received a composite name, VA-IVB.120 In any case, that layer contained features that seemed to be congruent with what the Bible said about Solomon. There were what appeared to be stables there, and the Bible said that Solomon had a large chariot force (1 Kings 4:26). We summarize the relevant features of Dever's "Solomonic" stratum at Megiddo as follows:'21

Stratum	Date/Structures	Associated biblical figure
VA-IVB	ca. 970–925 Four-entry gate casemate wall Palace 1723	Solomon Shishak destroyed it

One of the problems with this interpretation of Stratum VA-IVB at Megiddo involved a wall, numbered 325 by the excavators. The wall is of the offset-inset type: Solid and with recessed sections alternating with salient sections. If this solid wall was attached to the gate, then it meant that Megiddo's situation was not identical to that of Hazor and Gezer, where the gates were attached to casemate walls. Yigael Yadin had been the main advo cate of the idea that this offset-inset wall had nothing to do with the gate, and he further claimed that

there was a casemate wall that could be linked with the gate. Despite these problems, in 1990, Dever claimed that "[a]rchaeological investigation thus confirmed that Megiddo was one of the most prominent Solomonic provincial administrative centers, as suggested by 1 Kings 9:15."122

For Dever, only the most recalcitrant revisionists and perhaps even haters of Israel could deny the evidence. But by the time we arrive at Dever's 1998 treatment of the Iron Age in an anthology edited by Thomas Levy, we find something a bit odd. It comes in a caption to figure 6, which shows the very same gates that he had insisted were tenth century and Solomonic. According to the caption, these are "Ninth century BCE city gates: 1 Megiddo; 2 Hazor; 3 Gezer; 4 Ashdod; 5 Lachish."123 True enough, Dever cites a work by Aharon Kempinski and Ronny Reich as the source of the figure, but the use of this borrowed figure and caption signals agreement from Dever.124 Nothing in the accompanying text says otherwise.

But if a caption might be ambiguous, by 2005 Dever had clearly retreated from the certainty of a Solomonic date in this statement: "Thus, I believe that while the Hazor and Megiddo gates might turn out to be early 9th century, the Gezer gate will likely remain well fixed in the 10th century BCE." 125

What had happened to Dever's previous certitude? First, radiocarbon dates became available. According to Israel Finkelstein, an advocate of later dates for many strata previously assigned to the tenth century at Megiddo and other places, the radiocarbon dates support his side of the argument. True enough, we must be cautious as there are competing dates and debates about possible contamination of specimens used for radiocarbon dating.126 However, if contamination and other common factors can be controlled, we may have some relatively more objective indicators.

Second, the heat of the debate caused some very meticulous reexaminations of the stratigraphy of Megiddo. In particular, Norma Franklin, as part of her doctoral work at the University of Tel Aviv, reexamined the contested layers and concluded that "Stratum IVB is an imaginary stratum, and therefore so is its composite successor, Stratum VA-IVB."'Z' She had also conducted a very meticulous measurement of the dimensions of certain features, notably a palace numbered 1723 (discussed below), and found that it used what is called a "short cubit" that is 0.45 meters long. The short cubit is first attested in the Third

Intermediate Period (ca. 1070-712 BCE) in Egypt, and Omri and his dynasty in Northern Israel are contemporary with the twenty second Dynasty of Egypt (ca. 945-712 BCE). Thus, Franklin concludes that the use of the short cubit fits well within the ninth century BCE, not the Solomonic period. 121

Third, Dever could not really dismiss all critics as Israel haters or nonarchaeologists. Norma Franklin did her work at the Tel Aviv University. Likewise, Gabriel Barkay, a prominent Israeli archaeologist and no friend of minimalists, had concluded that

> [d]etailed examination of the gates, however, reveals that they are not identical and that they certainly were not built according to a single blueprint designed by a central authority.... Thus, the schematic and commonly held view regarding the homogeneity of the gates at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer and their attribution to Solomon in accordance with the biblical passage no longer holds true." 129

There is nothing wrong with changing one's mind on the basis of further evidence. But all of these retractions show that Dever's methodology and the whole battle with the minimalists would have been avoided by using a lesser level of certainty to describe the date and "architect" of those gates in the first place. What Dever called historical "data" and "facts" turned out to be, at least in these cases, interpretations after all.

OUT ON A DATE

As mentioned previously, Dever is emphatic that his date for the Gezer gate is "on commonly accepted ceramic grounds-not on a naive acceptance of the Bible's stories about `Solomon in all his glory.'11130 In another article Dever insists that the date of this pottery "is not predicated on any presuppositions derived from biblical sources."131 Recall that another reason that Dever provided for dating the "distinctive forms of red-slipped and slipped and hand-burnished (polished) pottery" to the tenth century was that such pottery "have always been dated to the late tenth century." 112 Baruch Halpern provides a detailed explanation of the supposed value of this type of pottery for dating the story of David, but leaves out crucial history of how this pottery became a valuable chronometer in the first place.133

So why was this type of pottery dated to the tenth century in the first place? Some scholars argue that it is actually circular reasoning and usually based on using the Bible as a chronometer. As Norma Franklin acutely notes in the case of Megiddo, "The pottery was established according to the pottery's strati graphic location vis-a-vis the architecture. In other words, if the stables were attributed to Solomon then the pottery was 10th century as well."'34 And Megiddo was a principal site used to establish pottery dating at other sites.13'

If one traces the history of how the anchor for tenthcentury pottery was established, one must return to William F. Albright and his excavations at a place called Tell Beit Mirsim. In 1932, Albright began soundings at a place that he believed to be the site of biblical Debir, a town mentioned as destroyed by Joshua (Joshua 10:38-39), located in the southern portion of the Judean hills.136

At issue is a layer identified as Stratum B3, whose destruction Albright dated to around 924 BCE, at the time of the Egyptian pharaoh named Shishak (ca. 931-910 BCE). This conclusion is not based on any documents of Shishak that might state that he destroyed the site we call Tell Beit Mirsim. Instead, it is based on assuming that 1 Kings 14:25-26 is correct about Shishak's advance against Jerusalem at the time of King Rehoboam, who is supposed to have reigned right after Solomon in the late tenth century BCE. In turn, the dates for Shishak's reign are partly dependent on the assumption that 1 Kings 14:25-26 is reliable.131 Albright then assumed that Shishak carried out a side expedition to destroy Tell Beit Mirsim.

The layer below that one, B2, was identified as having Philistine pottery, which Albright thought would only have spread after the invasion of the sea peoples (which included the Philistines). These invasions are recorded as having occurred in 1168 and 1167 BCE, according to Albright's reading of the records of Ramses III, which appear at the temple of Medinet Habu in Egypt.138

The importance of Tell Beit Mirsim can be gauged by reading the studies of pottery by Walter E. Rast, one of the excavators of another site, named Taanach, in northern Israel. Rast explains his dating of the pottery at Taanach by reviewing how it compares to that of Tell Beit Mirsim. In Rast's own words, "The phasing of Iron I in Palestine, which has achieved wide acceptance, goes back in particular to Albright's work at Tell Beit Mirsim. Here, the latest phase, Stratum B3, was fixed by the destruction of Shishak I, dated now to 918."139

Another lower layer, B 1, did not have any Philistine pottery, and so it was dated to most of the twelfth century BCE because it would have Philistine pottery if it were later. B2 did have Philistine pottery. Thus, you now had two fixed points: B1=pre-Philistines and the end of B3=Shishak, ca. 918. Since the biblical record (e.g., Joshua 11:21) indicates Debir was in Israelite hands prior to its destruction by Shishak, the red slip hand-burnished pottery found in B3 became a "model" for "Israelite" pottery found elsewhere, which could be dated to about the same time. Albright's interpretation of the layers at Tell Beit Mirsim may be visualized as follows:

LAYER	EVENT/MATERIAL CULTURE
B3	Late eleventh century to ca. 924 BCE, when it was destroyed by Shishak; “Israelite” red-slipped hand-burnished pottery
B2	Late twelfth century BCE–eleventh century BCE; Contained Philistine pottery; Conquered by Joshua, and settled presumably by Israelites.
B1	Twelfth century BCE Pre-Philistine pottery

The problem with this scheme is that Tell Beit Mirsim may not be identified correctly with Debir. Albright's last major article on the site states that " [a]lthough in our early work we were probably too confident that the town of Stratum B was destroyed in Shishak's invasion, ca. 924 B.C., that still remains the most probable date for the end of B."140 So we may not know what biblical site, if any, Tell Beit Mirsim represents. Moshe Kochavi has made a cogent case that Debir should be identified with another site named Khirbet Rabud.'41

In short, any connection with the destruction of Shishak is also tenuous. Nor is Shishak the only person who could destroy cities in Palestine. Shishak might not even have been king at the time of the destruction recorded at Tell Beit Mirsim, since the date of the destruction cannot be pinpointed exactly. Instead, all this indicates that the dating of the pottery for Tell Beit Mirsim is ultimately based on the assumption that the biblical record of a campaign by Shishak is

accurate. But even if it is accurate, it need not be connected with anything at Tell Beit Mirsim.

However, Shishak's supposed destructions are still linchpins in much of Dever's pottery chronology.142 And Dever's reconstruction of what Shishak destroyed is permeated by contradictions. For example, among the cities that Dever says should be included "at minimum" in the list of Shishak's destructions is Hazor. Yet when we look at the map of the route Dever provides for Shishak's military campaigns, Hazor is nowhere to be found.143 In fact, this and other inconsistencies in Dever's What Did the Biblical Writers Know?" has led even Ilan Sharon, a self-described admirer of Dever, to comment on the latter's sloppiness in handling such data. 144

And if we look at one of Dever's main excavation reports for Gezer, we learn that biblical presuppositions permeated the dating. Note the following:

> In any event, Gezer became an Israelite possession as a gift of an Egyptian Pharaoh to Solomon (1 Kings 9:16). It has been argued that at the death of David, a Pharaoh of the Twenty-first Egyptian Dynasty invaded Philistia, and there is archaeological evidence to supplement this

Dever then included a footnote that added, "During the summer of 1966 a destruction level was encountered below the city wall which still had to be dated in the tenth century, thus giving external support to the tradition behind 1 Kings 9:16."146 Dever also noted that a coexcavator, Darrell Lance, was not sure that Shishak (Siamun) should be credited with that destruction.

And indeed, the whole idea of Shishak's destruction of Gezer is based on the supposition that "Gezer" is the word to be reconstructed in a heavily damaged portion of a list of cities inscribed on an Egyptian monument belonging to Shishak.147 However, there are other cities whose names begin with that letter in the same general area (e.g., Gaza). And aside from the biblical reference, there was nothing in that destruction layer at Gezer to indicate who was responsible for the destruction. Thus, Dever must be using at least some biblical presuppositions to date the destruction and, by extension, the associated pottery.

SOLOMON’S PALACE?

To illustrate how quasiminimalists have themselves to blame for any rise in skepticism toward biblical archaeology, consider the hyperbolic statements of Baruch Halpern, a prominent quasiminimalist. In an attack on minimalists who doubt the attribution to Solomon for major architectural features of Megiddo, he confidently proclaimed:

> What is more, as David Ussishkin has shown, the major palace at tenthcentury Megiddo (strata VA-IVB), Palace 1723, matches the Bible's description of the Jerusalem palace in 1 Kings 6 to a

However, when one reads the actual article written by Ussishkin, a widely respected archaeologist, the parallels do not seem as impressive. 150

First, Halpern has the wrong biblical citation. The description of Solomon's palace is in 1 Kings 7, and Ussishkin himself makes it clear that he is concentrating on that chapter. But typographical errors, which anyone can make, should not lead us to evade the substantive issues on which our refutation is based. To understand the problems posed by Halpern's claim, it behooves us to read the relevant portion of 1 Kings 7:

> Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished his entire house. He built the House of the Forest of Lebanon; its length was a hundred cubits, and its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits, and it was built upon three rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams upon the pillars. And it was covered with cedar above the chambers that were upon the fortyfive pillars, fifteen in each row. There were window frames in three rows, and window opposite window in three tiers. All the doorways and windows had square frames, and window was opposite window in three tiers. And he made the Hall of Pillars; its length was fifty cubits, and its breadth thirty cubits; there was a porch in front with pillars, and a canopy before them. And he made the Hall of the Throne where he was to pronounce judgment, even the Hall of Judgment; it was finished with cedar from floor to rafters. His own house where he was to dwell, in the other court back of the hall, was of like workmanship. Solomon also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter whom he had taken in marriage. All these were made of costly stones, hewn according to measure, sawed with saws, back and front, even from the foundation to the coping, and from the court of the house of the LORD to

> the great court. The foundation was of costly stones, huge stones, stones of eight and ten cubits. And above were costly stones, hewn according to measurement, and cedar. The great court had three courses of hewn stone round about, and a course of cedar beams; so had the inner court of the house of the LORD, and the vestibule of the house. (1 Kings 7:1-12)

We begin by observing that Ussishkin's comparison omits a major building or portion of the palace described in this passage. That building is the one called "The House of the Forest of Lebanon." It is a large structure, measuring one hundred cubits long by fifty cubits wide by thirty cubits high. If we adopt the common equivalence of one cubit equals eighteen inches, then this structure was one hundred fifty feet long by seventy-five feet wide by fortyfive feet high. One cannot miss a building that large, and it is the largest structure mentioned in the passage.

So why would Ussishkin omit it from any supposed comparison with Palace 1723 of Megiddo, which supposedly fits 1 Kings 7 "to a tee"? Actually, the most we can call a reason is this: "This `house' will be omitted from our present discussion."i5' This is very perplexing because in the sentence prior to the quoted one, he had indicated a belief that this structure "seems to have been an important though separate unit within the framework of the royal palace." 112 In a more recent article, Ussishkin identifies it as a "royal treasury."153 One clear result of this omission, however, is that Building 1723 at Megiddo does not evidence a structure equivalent to that "Lebanon House," and so any claim that Solomon's palace matches Building 1723 "to a tee" is flatulent hyperbole.

The doorways form another problem. As Ussishkin notes, "[W]ith the exception of three stones of the superstructure, only the foundations of the palace were preserved ... and thus the location of all entrances had to be reconstructed ... it has to be mentioned that the location of many inner doorways is hypothetical."154 The location of the doorways is important because Ussishkin has specifically identified both Building 1723 and the building in 1 Kings 7 as examples of what are called Bit Hilani plans.

Ussishkin specifically identifies two structures at a place called Zinjirli (in what is now southern Turkey) as exemplars of this Bit Hilani plan. These exemplars are called the palaces of Kilamuwa and Barrekub. What they all have in common is: (1) "an entrance through a portico built in the long wall of the

entrance hall"; (2) "a side room beside the entrance hall"; and (3) "a main hall (the throne room) adjoining the entrance hall."155 In other words, if the main entry is on a short side of Building 1723, then this falsifies at least one of the features Ussishkin had identified as parallel to the Bit Hilani plan, of which he believes the palace in 1 Kings 7 is just another example. 116

Finally, Halpern's brief proclamation omits the fact that the exemplars that Ussishkin has chosen as parallel to the palace described in 1 Kings 7 were built in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE. Thus, one cannot argue that only a writer alive in the tenth century would have known of such structures. Any writer familiar with these structures in the eighth century could have just as easily fictionalized a story of Solomon's grandeur by attributing to him structures that he thought were what a king should have.

And all of the arguments about a Solomonic date for Palace 1723 may have been conclusively (if there is such a thing in archaeology) put to rest again by the work of Norma Franklin. As mentioned above, her review of the stratigraphy of Megiddo concluded that "the inception of Megiddo Stratum V, marked by Palace 1723, must now also be dated to the 9th century." 117 Franklin's reconstruction has reconfigured the entire main entry to Palace 1723 to diminish even further the parallels with Solomon's palace, which depended, in part, on the location of the doorways. In short, Solomon had nothing to do with Palace 1723 if we accept this chronology and architectural reconstruction.

The larger issue is that Halpern's claim of Palace 1723 fitting Solomon's palace "to a tee" continues to illustrate why biblical archaeologists, not postmodernists, have been their own worst enemy. Biblical archaeologists who rail against minimalism have only dug their own graves by revealing themselves to be the true postmodernists. They have treated varying levels of certainty as "proved," "facts," and "knowledge" instead of with the more appropriate, accurate (and humble): "reasonably believe on the basis of present evidence," or the like. What Halpern thought were facts have been shown not to be more than interpretations, and so Hayden White and Karl Popper are reaffirmed again.

FORGING AHEAD

In his discussion of evidence in support of the existence of Solomon's temple, Dever refers to an ivory pomegranate, which bears this inscription: "Set apart for

the priests of the temple of ... h."158 The missing part of the last word is usually restored so that the whole word reads YHWH, or Yahweh, the god of Israel. The pomegranate is thought to be the head of a priestly scepter, and was hailed for years as a surviving relic from Solomon's Temple.

The origins of the object, which was purchased by the Israel Museum in Jerusalem for five hundred fifty thousand dollars, are obscure. Yet the object was authenticated by among others Andre Lemaire, the French epigrapher and professor at the Sorbonne who figures prominently in the James Ossuary scandal discussed below. Lemaire had confidently eliminated the possibility of forgery in an article in Biblical Archaeology Review.159 Frank Moore Cross, the world's foremost epigraphist, was reported as "having no doubt as to the object's authenticity."160 Now, based on a wide range of data, the pomegranate has been declared a forgery by the Israel Antiquities Authority.161

Dever's acceptance as evidence of an object declared to be a forgery by the Israel Antiquities Authority is ironic in light of his delight over a self-admitted prank instigated by Alan Sokal, who planted a fabricated article in the postmodern journal called Social Text. 112 The article purported to prove that scientific laws were nothing more than cultural viewpoints.'63 The article was accepted and published in 1996, and subsequently Sokal exposed the prank in Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science, a book published originally in French with coauthor Jean Bricmont.164 It was widely seen as a good expose of the poor scholarly standards of postmodernism.

But if Dever believes that the Sokal prank exposed the shoddiness of the entire philosophy of postmodernism, then we would think Dever would be consistent and admit that his acceptance of an object declared to be a forgery by the Israel Antiquities Authority would also cast doubt on his entire methodology. Dever's acceptance as evidence of what is now considered a forgery actually supports Karl Popper's observation that any supposed historical "knowledge" actually depends on trust in an endless chain of authorities.

Indeed, even most archaeologists read the reports of other archaeologists and are unable to verify the information themselves. So one must trust that even as famous an archaeologist as Yigael Yadin, whose excavations at Masada have been the focus of great criticism, has not let personal agendas get in the way of sound archaeology. 165 We must trust that scholars have not forged a document

outright, as is alleged against Morton Smith, the controversial scholar of the New Testament.166 We must trust that an object is not part of a prank meant to expose the often unscientific nature of paleographical dating.

It might be thought that forgeries are rare or don't affect key issues in biblical studies. But recent cases of forgery are uncovering what may be a culture of forgery more entrenched and accepted than many in the public realize. 117 Such a judgment comes from no less than Oscar White Muscarella, who has been affiliated with the Metropolitan Museum of Art since 1964.161 He has also earned a PhD in archaeology. He remarks:

> The forgery culture is stratified and multi-facetted. It has a kinship system, a hierarchical structure, systems of gift exchange, laws, a coded language, judges and juries (usually the same), a police force. Its inhabitants include professors, curators, scientists, museum officials and trustees, dealers, smugglers, auction house employees, collectors, and forgers.169

And we have seen recent news stories about the shady world of antiquities trading that touches museums of even the highest reputation, including the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.17" The dark side of antiquities now includes Moshe Dayan, the Israeli war hero, who has been accused by a member of the Israel Antiquities Authority of a long career of robbing sites.171

Spectacular examples of forgeries related to the Bible are at the center of a trial in Israel that began in 2005. The trial followed an indictment, issued in December 2004 by the State of Israel, against Oded Golan and Robert Deutsch, two of the most prolific traders in antiquities related to the Bible. 112 A centerpiece of the trial is the so-called James Ossuary, which was announced to the world in 2002 through the auspices of the Biblical Archae ology Society, headed by Hershel Shanks. The ossuary was exhibited at the time of the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Toronto, where I had the opportunity to see it on display.

Briefly, an ossuary is a container for the bones of the dead. 171 Usually, the body is buried and decomposes, and then the bones are disinterred and deposited in the ossuary. The James Ossuary bears a sensational inscription, which in

translated English reads, "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus." That inscription is what made the ossuary particularly valuable. It might be the first time that the biblical Jesus was mentioned in an artifact dated to the first century. Fundamentalist Christians were particularly elated, as usually they would regard this as evidence not only for the existence of Jesus, but also for the historicity of every claim in the Gospels (see chapter 4).

The origin of the James Ossuary is unknown. It is owned by Oded Golan, a wellknown dealer in antiquities from Tel Aviv (Israel). In published interviews and reports by the Biblical Archaeology Review, Golan has admitted that the item was traded on the antiquities market, and so it is unprovenanced.14 The highest quality of evidence is assigned to items that are provenanced, meaning that we have confirmed the place where it was found in its ancient context.

Since then, the Israel Antiquities Authority has declared it a fraud in light of tests completed by an interdisciplinary team of geologists, chemists, and archaeologists.15 In particular, it is alleged that the "Jesus" word may have been added, even if the rest of the inscription is authentic. Supplementary and circumstantial evidence cited against Golan is the presence of a laboratory in his house. Nonetheless, the tests themselves have been challenged by Golan's supporters, who cite possible contamination introduced during any cleaning process.

Long inscriptions are always welcome in biblical archaeology, and this was initially the case with the so-called Jehoash inscription, which describes repairs made to the temple by the king of Judah name Jehoash (2 Kings 11-12; also spelled as Joash), who is dated to the ninth century BCE. The inscription might offer an instance of Dever's "convergence" because its description of the repairs was similar to that found in 2 Kings 12. Nonetheless, Oded Golan is now formally accused of forging this item.16 Frank Moore Cross concluded it is a forgery. l" Yet Cross's longtime collaborator, David Noel Freedman, argues for the authenticity of the inscription. 171

Two ostraca (potsherds) that had been dated to the time of the Kingdom of Judah are part of the indictment against Oded Golan and Robert Deutsch, an antiquities dealer who also was once an adjunct instructor of archaeology at the University of Haifa. These ostraca could have provided some important insights into the society of ancient Israel, as one of them contained what is called "The

Widow's Plea."19 The indictment alleges that an authentic potsherd from the first temple period was inscribed by the forgers.180 Forgers may use an authentic potsherd to fool scholars into also accepting the authenticity of the inscription on the potsherd.

Such forgeries not only force scholars to modify or retract claims of "historicity," but they also cast doubt on the entire methodology on which certain parts of biblical studies depends. Ada Yardeni, a prominent paleographer, is quoted as saying in regard to the James Ossuary, "If this is a forgery, I give up."181 One can see the reason for the despair. Most materials prior to the advent of radiocarbon and other scientific dating techniques had been dated by paleographers. These scholars looked at writings that they could anchor to specific historical periods and then compared new inscriptions to those of "known" dates.

Despite some successes, paleography also has many problems. Some of the reasoning is circular. For example, a paleographer might assume that X is of Y date, and so if we find Z similar to X, then it is of Y date. But sometimes we do not have enough information to tell us about regionalisms, and so what may be a regional variant may be seen as an advance or an archaism. Since not all letters of the alphabet may change at the same rate, paleographers may assume erroneously that a particular date is warranted because not enough is known about the rates of evolution for every letter.'82

These and other problems have also created heated battles on whether scholars should publish unprovenanced artifacts-artifacts whose origin is not ascertained. Usually, the highest confidence is placed in objects found undisturbed at an archaeological site. The technical term is the Latin in situ. Unprovenanced artifacts can, however, be authenticated in other ways and used with confidence by scholars. The most famous example would be the DSS, many of which were found by Bedouins rather than by archaeologists.

Some organizations, such as the American Institute of Archaeology, which publishes the authoritative American Journal of Archaeology (AJA), have stringent policies on the publication of such objects. Consider this statement from the AIA:

As a publication of the Archaeological Institute of America,

> AJA/Archaeology will not serve for the announcement or initial scholarly presentation of any object in a private or public collection acquired after December 30, 1973, unless its existence is documented before that date, or it was legally exported from the country of origin. An exception may be made if, in the view of the Editor, the aim of publication is to emphasize the loss of archae ological context. Reviews of exhibitions, catalogues, or publications that do not follow these guidelines should state that the exhibition or publication in question includes material without known archaeological findspot.183

Yet such policies have drawn the ire of many wellknown biblical scholars and archaeologists, including Frank Moore Cross and Lawrence Stager of Harvard, and William G. Dever. They were among the some one hundred fifty academics who signed a "Statement of Concern" in response to the policies of the American Institute of Archaeology and the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), which is a main venue for biblical archaeology.184 In brief, their response to the AIA policies notes that many of the most important finds in biblical archaeology have been unprovenanced. These include the DSS and the Nag Hammadi library, famous for revealing some lost "gospels." Moreover, they respond that genuine knowledge of the past might be lost by following such a policy.

And, indeed, it has proven very difficult to deny that genuine knowledge might be lost if one were to be absolutist in rejecting all unprovenanced artifacts. That is also why even the AIA and ASOR allow exemptions. As the AIA statement indicates, exceptions can be made if the editor deems the article to focus on the loss of context. However, that would open the door to almost any of the antiquities now declared a forgery. After all, the ivory pomegranate could qualify, as it would be the only item to mention the temple of Yahweh found so far that early. Likewise, ASOR makes exceptions relating to the looting in Iraq.

In any case, forgeries and unprovenanced items are certainly part of the reason there is enormous skepticism in biblical archaeology, in particular. Unlike other types of archaeology (classical, Paleolithic), the religionist and biblicist interests help drive the market. Any conclusive scientific proof that dating assigned by paleographers to the James Ossuary or other alleged forgeries was wrong will result probably in the demise of the reputation and credibility of some of the paleographers most often cited as authorities. More importantly, it

will jeopardize the credibility of the entire field of paleography.

THE DIVIDED MONARCHY AND STATEHOOD

The nationhood and statehood of Israel have been of great interest to archaeologists. Some have seen this as a symptom of the nationalistic basis of archaeology itself. In the case of biblical archaeology, many complain that archaeology has been used as part of a Zionist enterprise to dispossess the Palestinians. By claiming the antiquity of Jewish habitation of Israel, the argument goes, the state of Israel can feel legitimized historically.

Again, archaeology has been invoked to support the idea that there was a political unit that deserves to be called a state or nation of Israel and Judah. Dever argues that the material culture can help us establish that a divided monarchy existed. In particular, he cites the work of Raz Kletter, who believed that he could show that the southern kingdom, otherwise known as Judah, did have a culture that was consistent with it being its own political unit, and separate from that of the northern kingdom, which is known often simply as "Israel," after the division of the monarchy.185

Raz Kletter studied four types of objects that he believes are so typical of Judah that one could even draw the boundaries of Judah based on the statistical measures of their occurrence.186 The four objects he studied were: (1) pillared figurines; (2) inscribed scale weights; (3) rosette stamps; and (4) what are called lmlk stamps. The last refers to pottery that bears a stamp that reads lmlk, which means "belonging to the king."

Kletter indicates that he is aware of the problem of circularity in such an archaeological argument. That is to say, an object might be declared to be Judean because it is found in what already is presumed to be Judea. To solve this problem, Kletter appealed to the concept of a "heartland." As he elucidates it, "[T]he heartland of Judah is the area that was always under Judaean control, i.e., a minimal definition. Inside this area, Judaeans surely comprised the overwhelming percentage of the total population, and it was they who wielded political control." 117 More specifically, these areas would include the Judean mountains, Benjamin, the Judean desert, and the Negev desert. Kletter omits

Transjordan, or what is now east of the Jordan River, northern Israel, Phoenicia, and Philistia.

Although such an effort is commendable for its reliance on statistical analysis of material objects, the circularity has not necessarily disappeared. After all, what is the difference between saying that an object is Judean because it occurs in Judah and saying that Judeans are Judeans because they live in Judah? And what does it mean to say that Judeans comprised "the overwhelming percentage of the total population"? Would not the inhabitants of Judah always comprise the total population, and not just the overwhelming population? So clearly, by the term "Judean," Kletter means something besides simply an inhabitant of Judah.188 And so the first problem is that Kletter does not define a "Judean" person any better than others might define a Judean pot.

But what about the statistical analysis of the four objects? Do they occur only or predominantly within a circumscribed area that can be linked to the biblical Judah? If one looks at Judean pillared figurines (JPF), one will see that they are not all of the same design (see figure 2). But Kletter tells us that Judean pillared figurines differ from neighboring types insofar as JPF have "solid, handmade bodies, without separation of legs.... The base of the body is widened and usually concave."189 He further says that "[t]he definition of JPF as Judaean relies mainly on their distribution pattern."190

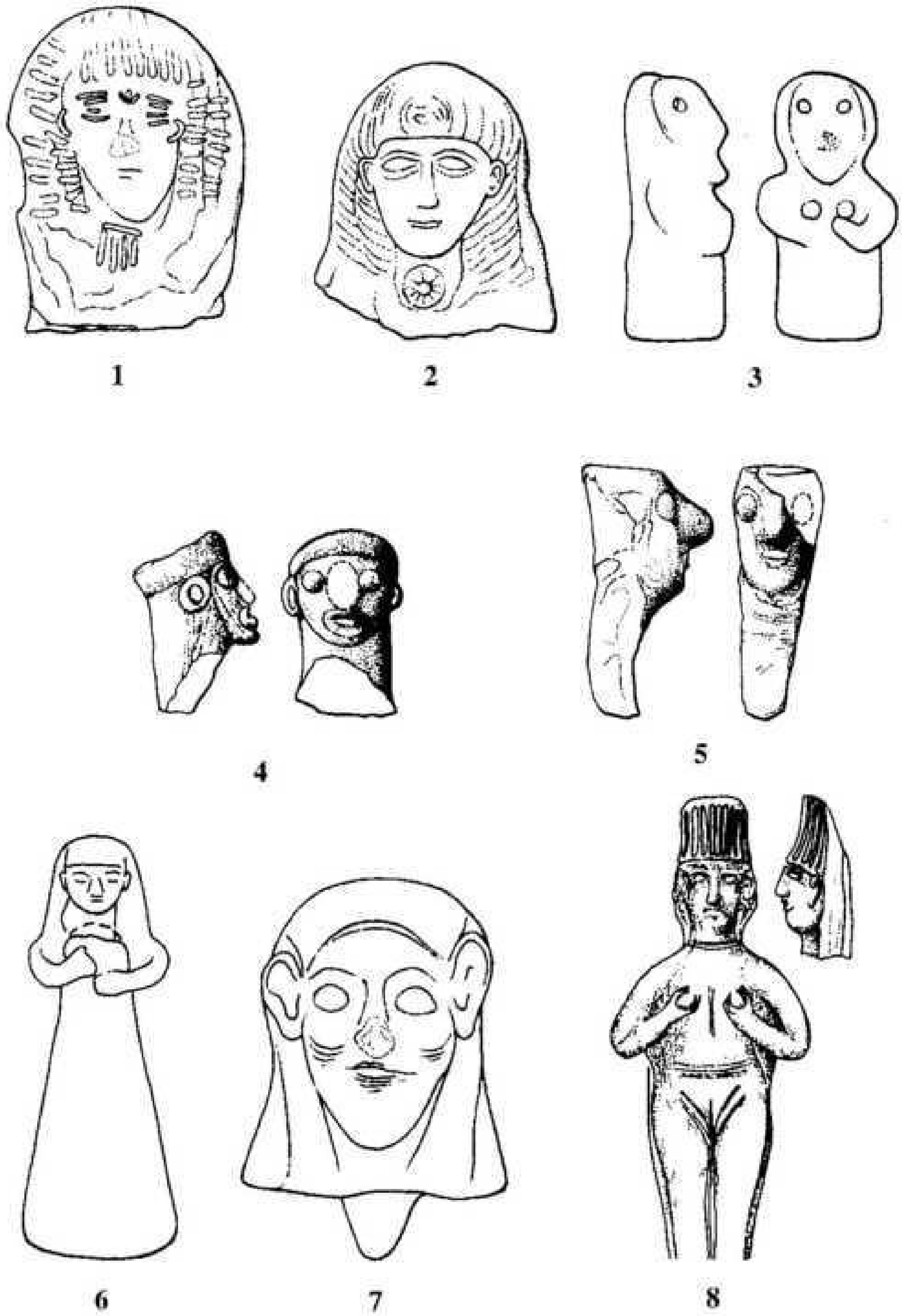


Figure 2: According to Raz Kletter, the geographical distribution of these Judean pillar figurines (JPF) can help to establish the boundaries of the kingdom of Judah (Raz Kletter, "Pots and Polities: Material Remains of Late Iron Age Judah in Relation to Its Political Borders," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research 314 [1999]: 30, fig. 3). Reprinted with the permission of the American Schools of Oriental Research.

Leaving aside problems of dating such figurines, one can still see that different borders could be drawn using the same statistics.19' For example, by Kletter's count, Azekah has four pillared figurines, while Gezer has seven. Yet, Gezer is placed outside of the Judean border, while Azekah is placed inside. In fact, at least nine other sites (Aroer, Beer Sheba suq, Khirbet Geresh, Moza', Tell el-Ful, Tel Goded, Tel Halif, Tel Masos) listed on Kletter's map have less pillar figurines than Gezer, yet they are still placed inside of the Judean borders. If we look at what Kletter calls Judean inscribed weights, one finds that Gezer has eleven, while Azekah has five. Again, Kletter places Azekah inside Judea but Gezer outside.

In the case of JPF, Metter explains the situation at Gezer and Tel Erani, which has eight pillar figurines, as the result of trade, but he then argues that this is unlikely because of "the religious nature of the JPF and their crude manufacture." 192 He suggests that perhaps Gezer was under indirect control of Judah prior to 701 BCE. His last explanation is that "on the whole, the number of JPF in Ekron and Gezer is not great, and does not in itself prove Judaean political or military control."193 But then why could we not say the same in the case of the other nine sites Kletter places inside Judean borders despite the fact that they have even fewer JPF than Gezer?

All of this raises the problem of what constitutes a threshold number to be included or excluded from Judean borders. This is particularly problematic when one sees how many more pillar figurines are counted for Jerusalem compared to other sites. Jerusalem has 405 pillar figurines, while the next highest number is 143, at nearby Tell en-Nasbeh. The next amount, 37 at Tell Beit Mirsim, is far below both of these; Beth Shemesh has 30, Lachish has 29, Arad has 23 (see figure 3).

Given the same statistics for JPF, we could just as easily draw a map with a smaller circle around Jerusalem. We can explain anything above fifty, just to pick any other number no less arbitrary, to draw the borders. We can then explain any amount less than fifty as the result of trade, and so on. And if the object is religious in nature, as Kletter himself argues, what about arguing that a cult existed in particular places that had very little to do with being Judean? In the case of the Rosette stamps, Jerusalem has 39 percent of them (sixty-nine items), while Ramat Rahel has the next highest percentage at 23.6 percent. We could be dealing with a Jerusalem or large urban phenomenon rather than a

Judean phenomenon.

The Wk stamps, which occur on the handles of hundreds of storage jars, seemingly provide better evidence than the other objects for the existence of a Judean political unit. 114 The word lmlk, which has plausibly been inter preted as "[belonging] to the king," usually is accompanied by a symbol. The symbol may represent either: (1) a single-winged creature or (2) a doubledwinged beetle. Thus, one finds two types of Wk stamps.

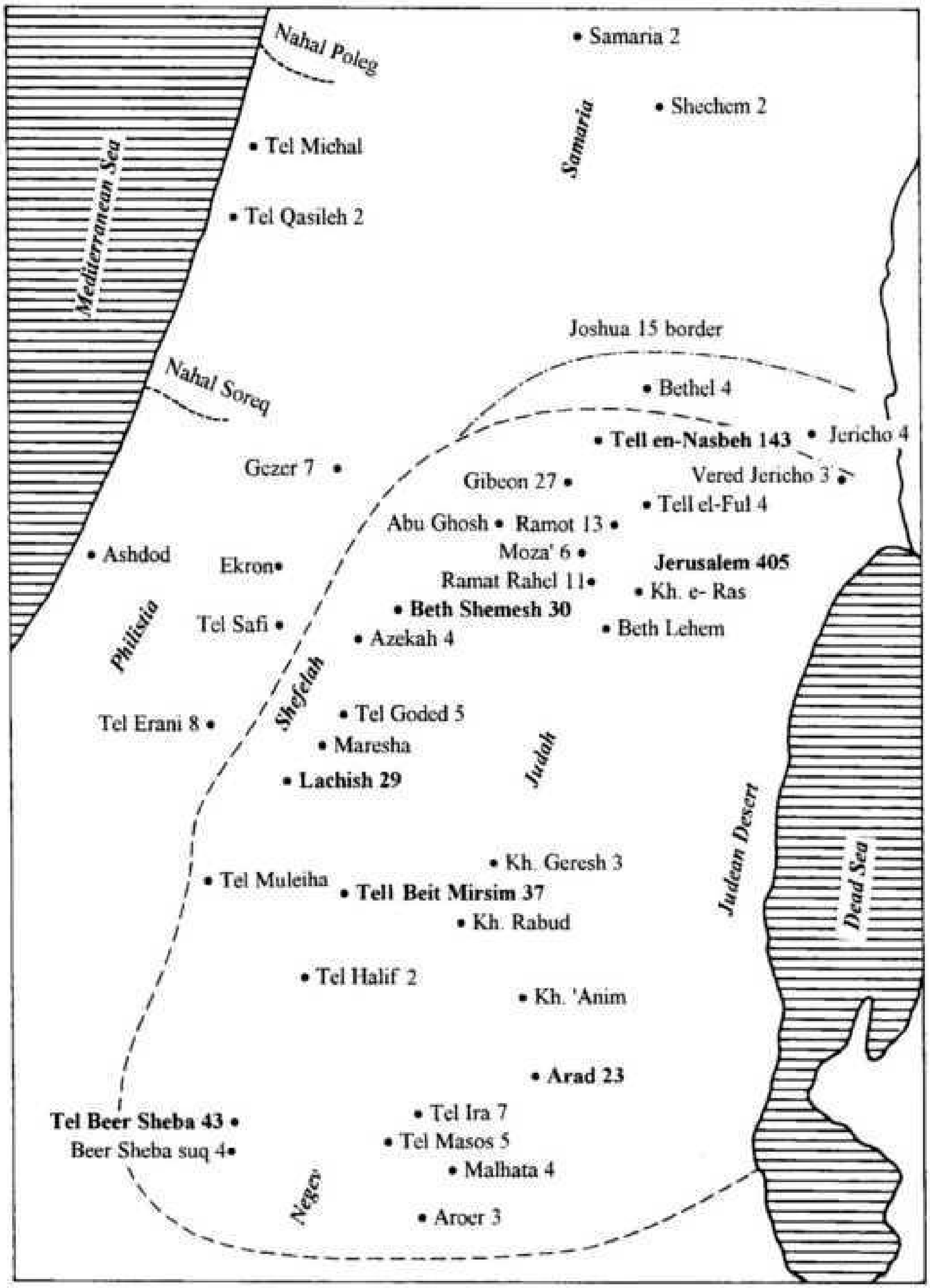


Figure 3: The borders of the kingdom of Judah, as reconstructed by Raz Kletter, on the basis of the distribution of Judean pillar figurines (Raz Kletter, "Pots and Polities: Material Remains of Late Iron Age Judah in Relation to Its Political Borders," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research 314 [1999]: 31, fig. 4). Reprinted with the permission of the American Schools of Oriental Research.

Four place names are usually found mentioned in the stamps: Hebron, Socoh, Ziph, and a mysterious name transcribed as mmst, but which Dever erroneously transcribes as "mm9lt."195 Most translate that name as "capital," and consider it a reference to Jerusalem. Yet some lack the name of a place, and so it is difficult to know what the purpose might be (provisions sent to the king or stored for the king?). For example, no stamps bearing the place name "Socoh" have been found at what is thought to be "Socoh." So why does that name occur on the stamps?

Nonetheless, the Wk stamps are prima facie evidence that there is a king. If there is a king, then we may infer the existence of a kingdom. These objects appear in high concentrations in material associated with the destruction of the city of Lachish by Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, around 701 BCE. Therefore, many scholars would argue that these stamps may reflect an effort by Hezekiah, king of Judah, to collect provisions in light of the Assyrian onslaught.196 Thus, they may be dated to the latter part of the eighth century.

All this may be reasonable enough, but Kletter shows the same sort of inconsistency in applying the statistical data that we saw in the case of the other objects. Of the one hundred twenty Wk stamps he uses for his data, about thirty-seven (7 percent) are found at Gezer. But Kletter does not count that as Judean territory outright. Rather, Kletter explains that "[t]hat may imply direct rule by Hezekiah there, or at least close relationships ... the stamps cannot indicate an exact border line, nor short time fluctuations." 197 Yet the site known as Tell el-Judeideh, with an equal number of stamps (thirty-seven), is not subjected to the same qualification.

Moreover, Kletter's work again represents the idea that material objects reflect ethnicity. Some may and some may not. An object may reflect diverse types of group behavior. Some artifacts may be the result of an ethnic behavior, and others may be the result of a religious behavior. For example, if one believes that "Anglo" in America is an ethnic group, then one will observe that some wear crosses and some don't. The crosses don't really pertain to the Anglo group identity as much as they might pertain to a religious, specifically Christian group identity. So unless we have much more information on what sorts of groups existed in what is called Judea, it remains precarious to use material culture to make such generalizations.

NATIONALISM AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Given that the statistical studies of Kletter and other archaeological data can be interpreted in different ways, why is so much time expended on establishing the existence of Israelites and an ancient "state" or "kingdom" of Israel? Given the fact that biblical authors themselves attest to the existence of so many other people in the highlands, why are so many scholars still so fixated on privileging the existence of "Israel" and "Israelites" in the Iron Age? Why all the effort to prove a "United Monarchy" under David and Solomon?

Keith Whitelam of the University of Sheffield thinks he has the answer. Whitelam is perhaps the most vocal critic of biblical archaeology's nationalism. On the first page of his book, he declares that "[t]he history of ancient Palestine has been ignored and silenced by biblical studies because its object of interest has been an ancient Israel conceived and presented as the taproot of Western civilization." 191 Dever, in turn, labels some of Whitelam's statements as "certainly anti-Jewish and anti-Israel." 199 More recently, Nadia Abu El-Haj, an anthropologist at the University of Chicago, has written an indictment of the role of archaeology in supporting Israel's politics.200

Proving the existence of an Israelite kingdom or "state" as far back as possible is crucial for current arguments about the legitimacy of the Israeli state. Regardless of the validity of such motivations, we certainly do see that claims to the land of Israel are argued on the basis of the supposed existence of a "state" or "kingdom" as far back as possible. Consider The Case for Israel by Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz, who says, "Historians believe that the Hebrews arrived in present-day Israel sometime in the second millennium B.C.E. Under Joshua, and later King David and his successors, independent Hebrew kingdoms existed.""'

In fact, Dershowitz does not know his history very well because the Bible never claims that Joshua was a king or had a kingdom. The Bible assigns the honor of being the first king to Saul (1 Samuel 10:17-26). No prominent Christian, Jewish, or secular historian argues that an independent Hebrew kingdom ever existed under Joshua.202 Yet Dershowitz, despite his factual errors, does follow a long tradition in using archaeology and history to support Zionist claims to the land of Israel.

Indeed, there are plenty of statements by the major archaeologists about the importance of archaeology in the affirmation of modern Israeli identity. As Albright stated it, "Above all, archaeology helps to produce among Israelis, a sense of belonging.... From Abraham to modern times there was no period in which the ancestors of modern Israel were not living in the land."203 If we return to Kletter's work, we find that near the end of his study he quotes the prominent Near Eastern archaeologist Colin Renfrew, who says, "`What is a people if it is not a political unit?' and practically all the modern cultures that we know are national ones."204 So Kletter's whole exercise ultimately becomes fodder for the minimalists, who have insisted that nationalism often drives archaeological agendas.

Anson Rainey, perhaps the most distinguished scholar of Syro-Palestinian geography, has expended much effort in trying to prove the historical accuracy and stability of the biblical term "Canaan." In discussing the importance of the study of historical geography, Rainey asserts that "Israel's constitution as a nation is firmly linked with its occupation of the `Land of Canaan."205 Rainey is notable for using the terms "nationality" and "national affiliation" even when they do not seem appropriate in an ancient or modern context. Thus, Rainey describes an inhabitant of Ashdod, a city, as having a "national affiliation."2°6

Dever falls squarely in this tradition. Despite his one-time advocacy of the more inclusive term "Syro-Palestinian" archaeology, Dever remains obdurate in claiming periods and places (e.g., Tel Masos) as "Israelite," even where the evidence is lacking or can be interpreted in other ways.207 After chastising the minimalists for lack of "awareness of the theoretical literature on state formation processes," he goes on to declare that "the single most important criterion for defining `statehood' is centralization of power."208 Dever also declares that ethnic consciousness is "an essential concomitant of national identity and statehood."209 Regardless of the merits of the definition of a "state," it is clear that his conclusions for the existence of Solomonic or Davidic state go beyond the present data.

In fact, Dever overlooks recent reexaminations of state formation theories. For example, Anthony W. Marx argues that it is useful to distinguish nationalism from statism. Nationalism is "the political sentiment of popular solidarity intended to coincide with states .11210 One can have feelings of solidarity or nationalism without states, and one can have states without nationalism. States,

Marx says, are "institutions claiming a legitimate monopoly of coercion and rule ."211 That might also mean that material objects, if they reflect behavior precisely at all, may reflect unified ethnic activity without the existence of a state.

NATIONALISM AND CHRONOLOGY

Perhaps nowhere is such a nationalistic focus more evident than in how biblical archaeologists speak about the chronology of the lands on the eastern end of the Mediterranean. In the case of the ancient Near East, these are still based on the three-metal system often attributed to Christian Jurgesen Thomsen (1788-1865), the first curator of the National Museum of Denmark. In an effort to organize the morass of prehistoric collections in that museum, Thomsen organized materials into what he believed to be three successive ages of technological progress in prehistory: stone, bronze, and iron. The three-age system was introduced to the public at the opening of the museum, although the first clear exposition was in 1836.212

Since the time of Thomsen, archaeologists have adapted this system to different parts of the world. For our purposes, we need only concern ourselves with how such chronology has been applied in biblical archaeology. The main periods we discuss are the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 BCE) and the Iron Age (1200-586 BCE), whose names and dates can be found without much change in almost any authoritative manual in the last fifty years or so.213

And, indeed, one soon sees how nationalism and/or biblicism influences some subdivisions. Consider, for example, the period called the Iron Age in Israel, which is usually placed between 1200 and 586 BCE. Why those dates? Amihai Mazar, one of the most prominent archaeologists in the world, explains it thus:

> The term "Iron Age" covers the period between the end of the Late Bronze Age (about 1200 B.C.E.) and the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E.... In 1958, following the excavations at Hazor, Aharoni and Amiran suggested that it be divided at 1000 B.C.E., with the Iron Age I (1200-1000 B.C.E.) including the period of the Judges and Saul, and the Iron Age II-III (1000-586 B.C.E.) including the whole of the monarchic period up to the destruction of the First Temple. 14

First, note that the division has little to do with the use of iron or bronze. The end of the Bronze Age did not automatically mean the end of the use of bronze, and the beginning of the Iron Age does not exactly correspond with the beginning of the use of iron. Some might argue that statistically iron did begin to predominate in the Iron Age, and so we ought not make such a big issue of exact years as boundaries.

Yet predominance of a particular metal is also not the criterion that archaeologists are actually using. As Gabriel Barkay notes, "[A]lthough the use of iron in functional artifacts began in the Late Bronze Age, iron technology became dominant only in the Iron Age IL"215 Thus, if it were based on Dever's idea of letting material culture speak for itself, Iron II actually begins the Iron Age. Gabriel Barkay also notes that the distinction between the tenth and ninth centuries "is based mainly on historical considerations, and the biblical record emphasizes the difference between the days of the United Monarchy and the period of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The material culture, however, exhibits considerable continuity between the two centuries."216

But it is also clear that national history is being used to make the initial and terminal points of the Iron Age II and III. After all, there is no independent historical or archaeological evidence for a kingdom of Saul, which is referenced by Mazar. Second, the division is not made on any differences in the material culture. Barkay comments about the use of 586 as the terminus for the Iron Age, saying, "However, the material culture in the Land of Israel after this date was largely the same as that found before the destruction."217

In fact, there is no reason why we should use the destruction of Israel's temple as the main division. After all, the Babylonians, who destroyed the Hebrew temple in 586 BCE, destroyed the temples of other people before and after 586 in the general vicinity of Israel. Clearly, the division is chosen on national grounds because the history of Israel forms the anchor for the chronology. Of course, this might not matter so much if archaeology were just about Israel. But the fact is that such divisions are still followed even when broader rubrics are chosen, such as Syro-Palestinian archaeology, which is supposed to be more inclusive of cultures beyond Israel.

KING ARTHUR AS ANALOGY

In discussing the Tel Dan Inscription, Philip Davies once remarked, "I am not the only scholar who suspects that the figure of King David is about as historical as King Arthur."218 In fact, such an analogy has also been used by Niels Peter Lemche and by Thomas L. Thompson.219 However, the King Arthur analogy usually functions more as a rhetorical device than as a sustained historical comparison.220 This is particularly unfortunate because study of the development of Arthurian traditions can test quite specifically some of the dismissals of that analogy, such as this one by William G. Dever:

> There is no reason, for instance, to dismiss the "era of David" as no more historical than many regard the tales of King Arthur (as Thompson does). Despite many embellishments by the later Deuteronomistic redactors, the main elements of the story probably derive from ancient sources and depict actual conditions at the time. It is difficult if not impossible, to explain how Jewish writers living in Palestine in the 3rd-2nd centuries, when the remnants of Israel had not experienced kingship for some three or four centuries, could have made up such complex stories about kingship out of whole cloth.221

Dever is reacting against the minimalists who argue that the Bible was written in the third to second centuries BCE, which is much later than most biblical scholars would allow. But even if such a minimalist opinion is unwarranted, there is an obvious fallacy in Dever's argument, and that is the notion that "Israel had not experienced kingship for some three or four centuries" by the time of the third to second centuries BCE.

What Dever apparently means is that Jews did not have a king of their own for that period. However, not having a king of one's own is not exactly the same as being unfamiliar with kingship, which was the norm everywhere Jews lived. The Jews who lived in Babylonia were experiencing kingship, even if it was foreign. Jews spoke about the kingship of Cyrus (Isaiah 45) after they had a king of their own, and they seemed very familiar with how that kingship worked. People who live under a foreign king or who are familiar with foreign kings are perfectly able to imagine a king of their own.

Consider also the Letter of Aristeas, which is now conceded to have been a largely fictitious account of how the Septuagint originated. The author is a Jew, who by Dever's definition has not "experienced kingship." But this author has no

problem crafting a detailed conversation between the king and the scribes that would produce the Septuagint.222

My own examination of the Arthurian materials and scholarship, in fact, reveals the naivete behind the denial that large and complex traditions can be developed in a short time. More accurately, such complex traditions may seem to emerge from next to nothing because of gaps in some of our preserved records. At the same time, a study of the Arthurian materials reveals that its scholarship has undergone similar transformations in the use of evidentiary and archaeological materials. We need not rehearse the entirety of Arthurian scholarship to make our case, but a brief survey will be useful.

We begin with Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman, two prominent Arthurian scholars today, as they outline one of the goals of their critical survey of the Arthurian corpus:

> In this book, however, we distance ourselves from the debates over whether or not such a king actually existed. Instead, we consider why, in the twelfth century, a set of narratives about King Arthur suddenly emerges full-blown, virtually from nowhere (from the margins of the Norman empire), as an important subject of historical writings (at the center of the Norman empire) and why Arthur has since continued to be an enduring cultural and semi-historical figure.223

As in the case of David, our contemporary textual evidence for a historical King Arthur is nearly nil.224 King Arthur supposedly lived in the late fifth or early sixth centuries (ca. 480-537). However, it is not until about 800 that a Welsh antiquary named Nennius provides perhaps the earliest reference to a king named Arthur.225 He does so in a book called the Historia Brittonum (History of the Britons), which speaks of twelve battles fought by King Arthur, who is associated with a clairvoyant named Ambrosius (compare to Merlin). These twelve battles are listed by places that are mostly obscure (e.g., River Glein). Paradoxically, Roger Loomis, one of the most distinguished Arthurian scholars, thinks that obscurity supports the existence of those places precisely because "a mere forger would have picked wellknown places."226

The Annals of Wales (Annales Cambriae), dating from around the tenth century, may contain a reference to the "historical" Arthur. The Annals consist

of a set of Easter tables, which were used to determine the dates of Easter, whose exact date could vary from year to year.227 Important events were noted for many of those years. One notice on those Easter tables for the year 499 (or 516), mentions the "battle of Badon, in which Arthur carried the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ for three days and three nights on his shoulders, and the Britons were victorious."228 An entry for 537 says that Arthur and Mordred perished at the battle of Camlann.229 In any case, we can concur with H. J. Higham when he states, "Arthur is only an occasional figure, therefore, in British literature in the period between c. 850 and c. 1000."230

By the time of Wace (ca. 1100-1174), we have the appearance of a Round Table, and Layamon (ca. 1200) provides the first treatment in Middle English.231 Layamon also says that many falsehoods have been told about Arthur. This, of course, indicates the development of competing traditions, as Layamon could not himself verify what was true about Arthur anyway. Other sources contributed features we find in the canonical treatments of Arthur (e.g., Lancelot and the Holy Grail gain prominence with the Vulgate Cycle of ca. 1215-1230).

With the arrival of William of Malmesbury, we seemingly have an histo rian that cares about analyzing his sources critically. Around 1125 he wrote "On the Deeds of English Kings" (Gesta rerum anglorum).232 William wants the reader to know that if he does not gain fame for being eloquent, at least he will be appreciated for his diligence (saltem industriae testimonium).233 He informs the reader, "I vouch nothing of the truth of long past transactions but the consonance of the times."234 So even if particular events cannot be verified, at least the nature of the "era" can be vouched for.

This is important in light of quasiminimalist Baruch Halpern's study of biblical history titled The First Historians (1988), which seeks to show that "some of these authors-those who wrote works recognizably historicalhad authentic antiquarian interests. They meant to furnish fair and accurate representations of Israelite antiquity."235 He finds evidence in, among other examples, the story of the assassination of Eglon, the Moabite king, by Ehud, the Israelite hero in Judges 3:12-30.

Some modern apologists will use the fact that the DtrH does not hide David's defects as evidence for the historicity of David. Thus, Josh McDowell,

the popular Christian apologist, supports the veracity of the Bible in part because "the Bible deals very frankly with the sins of its characters. ... King David's adultery with Bathsheba and his subsequent attempted cover-up is revealed (2 Sam. 11-12)."236 We find a similar rationale in a more "liberal" academic scholar, R. N. Whybray, who says, "Far from trumpeting the glorious past, these writers chronicle the ignominious slide of their own ancestors into a fully merited disaster. Such a portrayal is unlikely to have been simply invented and corroborated with such detail."237 The premise, of course, is that a false history would try to hide rather than expose the flaws of its heroes.

But William of Malmesbury is quite cognizant of how the credibility of his work depends on not concealing defects, as the following statements make clear in the case of how he will deal with the deeds of King William the Conqueror:

> I shall steer a middle course: where I am certified of his good deeds, I shall openly proclaim them; his bad conduct I shall touch upon lightly and sparingly, though not so as to conceal it; so that neither shall my narrative be condemned as false, nor will I brand that man with ignominious censure, almost the whole of whose actions may reasonably be excused, if not commended.211

So while we can appreciate William's willingness to be candid about a king's defects, his statement also should alert a critical historian that a good storyteller could use this technique to bring credibility even if his story is false.

But if we are now enamored of how faithful William means to be, we must also consider some of his other statements that must give us pause. After all, he tells us that one of the aims of his history is one "which by an agreeable recapitulation of past events, excites its readers, by example, to frame their lives to the pursuit of good, or to the aversion of evil."239 The phrase to note here is "agreeable recapitulation," which now makes it appear that facts may be spinned to make the retelling agreeable.

At the time of William of Malmesbury there seems to have been great worry on the part of the new dynasty of Norman conquerors. They worried that this past king, named Arthur, might return. William says he has heard some stories about Arthur, and he labels them as "fables" (Hic est Artur de quo Britonoum nugae hodique delirant).240 William even says he has investigated the matter,

and he cannot find any burial place for Arthur, which had helped to fuel the story of his return.

Of course, it is mystifying how anyone could think that a king such as Arthur, who left no records from his own supposed era, could be the subject of such speculation of his return. But this is not unlike the situation of David, who is also believed to be returning in Ezekiel 37:24, which most scholars will date to around the sixth century, or some three hundred years after the supposed glorious reign of David.

So except for a few other mundane anecdotes about King Arthur, this is the situation on the eve of the most monumental history of King Arthur written in the twelfth century. The author is Geoffrey of Monmouth. As Finke and Shichtman note, "Our claim is not that Geoffrey was the first historian to mention Arthur; rather we argue that he created him by being the first to shape scattered and enigmatic references in Latin and perhaps in Welsh or Breton into a coherent narrative, a story with a beginning, middle, or end."24' Indeed, no one before had created a full-length biography of Arthur from birth to death.

And what a complex story it is for Geoffrey.242 We have dozens upon dozens of characters and places and events for which there is no previous record. Given Geoffrey's work, why would we be mystified that any historian, living hundreds of years after the supposed time of David, could also construct a "history" of a kingdom of David with a beginning, middle, and end? In 1 Samuel 16 we have David's beginning, and then his rise to power through the rest of 1 and 2 Samuel, and finally his death in 1 Kings 1. The complexity of David's story, in terms of numbers of characters, events, and places pales in complexity to that of Geoffrey.

The lists of Solomon's officials in 1 Kings 4:7-19 are often cited as evi dence that they derive from a real historical source.243 In a recent critique of Israel Finkelstein's theories, Michael Coogan, a respected biblical scholar, says that the occurrence of the list in 1 Kings 4:7-19, together with the lists of David's officials in 2 Samuel 8:16-18 and 2 Samuel 20:23-26, are best explained as "genuine archives from the tenth century B.C.E."244 Coogan's reasoning is that "one [list] would have been sufficient if the writer simply wanted to give the impression of a royal bureaucracy."245 He deems especially important the fact that the lists include individuals classified as a recorder and a secretary,

something that signals scribal activity.

Yet Geoffrey has highly formalized lists of kings who paid homage to Arthur, and many of the lands mentioned are perfectly identifiable historically ("Acil, the king of the Danes; Lot, who was king of Norway, and Gonfal jarl of the lawless Orkneys").246 Sir Thomas Malory repeats variants of that list, as well as the list of officials, such as "Sir Kay seneschal of England, and Sir Baudwin of Britain was made constable; and Sir Ulfinus was made Chamberlain; and Sir Bastia was made warden ...1124'

But no serious Arthurian scholar deems such lists as coming from the archives of an actual king Arthur. Nor do the multiple and variant copies of those lists support an archival source any better or worse than a list that occurs only once. Geoffrey and many other writers are perfectly capable of adding all sorts of verisimilitude to their narratives (compare also the two genealogies of Jesus in Matthew 1 and Luke 3).

Finally, we mention the work of Sir Thomas Malory (d. 1471), an English writer whose identity remains uncertain but who is credited with writing Le Morte D'Arthur, the first prose account in English of the rise and fall of King Arthur and the fellowship of the round table. For centuries, Malory's work had been viewed as faithfully represented in the editions of the famous English printer William Caxton (died ca. 1422). However, Eugene Vinaver's study of the "Winchester Manuscript," a copy of Malory's own work discovered at the Fellows' Library at Winchester College in 1934, changed all that. Vinaver concluded that Malory's work was reshaped drastically by Caxton, who eliminated and modified Malory's material to achieve a unified work never so envisioned by Malory.248 Vinaver remarks that Caxton's "rendering is not only a drastic abridgement but a new work, and to reprint it under Malory's name is at best misleading."249

Vinaver's work has since been heavily critiqued, and we now have a reexamination of the Winchester manuscript by Takako Kato, who shows that things are more complicated.250 Kato argues that Caxton, though he did modify materials pertaining to an episode about a war with the Romans, did not alter as much of the rest of the work as Vinaver supposed. Yet had we never discovered the Winchester manuscript, we might simplistically assume that Caxton = Malory.2s'

In any case, the critiques of Vinaver show only how little we know about Malory and his work, despite the relatively large amount of evidence that helps us track its evolution. We do not have this level of information about anything relating to the origin and development of Davidic narratives in the Bible. Thus, it is fruitless to think that we know much about a United Monarchy when there is so much more material about the kingdom of Arthur, a figure almost everyone agrees is mostly mythical.

And just as nationalism has been invoked to explain the composition of large biblical works, such as the DtrH, many Arthurian scholars also point to nationalistic agendas as the impetus for the creation of such large and complex Arthurian compositions. In the case of Geoffrey, we have relatively rich evidence for the circumstances in which his narrative was produced. Among the most plausible theories is that Geoffrey composed his work to provide his patrons, the recent Norman conquerors of Britain, with a constructed "British" identity that would help affirm their continuity with their conquered subjects.212

ARTHURIAN ARCHAEOLOGY

If we pursue the biblical scholarship analogy with the history of British archaeology, we also see how similar it is to what is happening in Israel. As we have mentioned, much has been staked in the discovery of the Tel Dan Inscription, in which there is a reference to what most scholars interpret as "the house/dynasty of David." This inscription is dated to between one hundred years to three hundred years after David's time. Likewise, we also have inscriptional materials for Arthur.

The earliest inscription is at the Cathedral of Modena, in Italy, far away from Britain. It is dated to between 1099 and 1120. The inscription appears on a semicircular frieze that portrays a tower in the center and three knights approaching it from each side. One knight approaching the tower bears the inscription "Arthur of Britain" (Artus de Bretani). The woman in the tower is inscribed as "Winlogee," which some have interpreted as a form of Guenevere.

If we use Dever's criterion of "convergence" between these textual and archaeological witnesses, then we have established not only the existence of Arthur but also the historicity of the episode depicted with Guenevere. Moreover, Dever has told us that it is wrong to think that "one witness is no

witness." Dever has ruled that "[w]henever the two sources or `witnesses' happen to converge in their testimony, a historical `datum' (or given) may be said to have been established beyond reasonable doubt."253 An Arthurian kingdom, therefore, is now a "historical datum."

Recall that claims of "Solomonic gates" and palaces have figured prominently in attempts to establish the historicity of Solomon. Arthur has experienced a similar situation, with divisions between those that think they have authentic historical information about the Arthur of the fifth century (e.g., Leslie Alcock) and authors who believe we must be much more skeptical about the sources (e.g., Dumville).254 In the 1960s, investigations at a place called Cadbury Castle, in Somerset, led some archaeologist to conclude that it had been inhabited around 500 and 400 BCE. Cadbury Castle had long been associated with King Arthur. We have this report of the finds:

> The most exciting state of the excavations revealed that the hill had been refortified about A.D. 470; this was proved by the presence, tamped into wall trenches and post holes, of pottery shards, their edges still sharp, which belong to the "Tintagel Pottery" group, dated in the fifth century. The buildings of the period contemporary with Arthur have been identified by their remains as a defense work on the summit ... a gate in the south-west curve of this ... a great hall, 60 by 30 feet, gabled at each end with a lofty thatched roof ... the image of a feasting-hall, of the kind evoked by the Cadbury research, is one that rises in the mind when reading the tenthcentury Arthurian story, Culwych and Olwen255

Note that as in the case of identifying gates as Solomonic we also have a case of "Tintagel" pottery that serves to reinforce connections with a King Arthur, who even Dever must agree is mostly fiction.

In sum, the rise of Arthurian literature refutes the notion that ancient authors could not create "complex stories about kingship out of whole cloth."256 In fact, there are examples like that of King Arthur from all over the globe, and we can even observe it today as it happens. Just consider the Book of Mormon, which provides a complex story with many characters, places, and events that have little clear preceding record. It is attributed to a single individual, Joseph Smith.257 So whether David existed or not, it is clear that a seemingly rapid development of complex literature cannot be used as definitive evidence for

historicity.

And although most minimalists have used the King Arthur analogy pri manly as a rhetorical device, the study of Arthurian materials also supports the scenario that minimalists say is responsible for the creation of such complex traditions. That scenario posits an effort to forge an identity for imperialistic or nationalistic purposes. In the case of the DtrH, the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian empires could provide just as forceful an impetus for such complex literature as the Norman conquest of England may have done in the case of Geoffrey's Arthur.

SO WHAT DO WE KNOW?

By applying our rigorous version of empiricorationalist positivism, we can now answer Dever's titular and Watergate-inspired question: What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? As we have said, the use of the word "know" is not only epistemologically inconsistent and inappropriate but it also leaves the way open for postmodernists who will simply point out how something thought to be "known" was later shown to be "not known," creating a clearly incoherent epistemology.

Dever's own evolution is a radiant illustration of why "know" requires the highest standard, direct verification, which is impossible for most historical reports from the ancient past. Recall that Dever told us that it had been "proved" that the gates at Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo were Solomonic though even he now concedes that some may turn out to be later. Dever told us that the ivory pomegranate, which has now been declared a forgery, was "probably from the Jerusalem temple,"258 so that even this lesser degree of certainty was too high. Not using "know," "proved," or their synonyms would have eliminated that problem immediately.

Minimalism is the most appropriate empiricorationalist and positivist stance toward all ancient history. Minimalists should be proud and wear the badge with pride, for the term applies to those who insist on only the highest standards of verification before using the words "know" and "proved," a set of standards nearly impossible to obtain for the establishment of the historicity of most ancient stories. In fact, in one of his latest essays, Dever has had to admit that " [l]ay people may not have noticed, but nearly all of us have become

`minimalists' of a sort."259

Now for the results. There was probably an entity called "Israel" by the Egyptians at the time of Merneptah (ca. 1210 BCE), but whether "Israel" was a selfdesignation at that point is not clear. A location for this group or territory in the steppes of Transjordan is just as plausible (per Rainey) as in the highlands west of the Jordan River. Whether "Israel" saw itself as part of Canaan or as part of some larger Canaanite group is unclear at that point. "Israelite" is no more an appropriate designation for the people occupying the hill country in the so-called Iron I period than "Canaanite" or the designation for any other people living in those highlands according to the biblical texts.

David's existence is still more akin to that of Arthur, and the Tel Dan Inscription tells us no more about David than the Modena Inscription tells us about King Arthur. There is no independent evidence for a kingdom headed by Solomon, so that is where we have to leave that claim-inconclusive. The gates at Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo speak nothing about Solomon. In terms of illuminating the religion of the "Israelites," Dever had it right when in 1983 he wrote, "[A]rchaeology of either the `biblical' or the `secular' persuasion has scarcely augmented our understanding of the actual cult in ancient Israel in any fundamental way. 11260

Within the Deuteronomistic History, it is reasonable to believe in the existence of the following kings based on independent corroboration in Assyrian and Babylonian documents :261

Northern Kingdom (Israel)	Southern Kingdom (Judah)
Omri (ca. 885–874 BCE)	
Ahab (ca. 874–853 BCE)	
Jehu (ca. 841–790 BCE)	
Joash (ca. 805–790 BCE)	
Menahem (ca. 740 BCE)	Hezekiah (725–696 BCE)
Pekah (ca. 735 BCE)	Manasseh (696–642 BCE)
Hoshea (ca. 730–722 BCE)	Jehoiachin (605–562 BCE)

Overall, this is a very impoverished yield for any sort of "biblical history" when

one compares it to many of its Near Eastern neighbors.

SUMMARY

Biblical archaeology has helped to bury the Bible, and archaeologists know it. Ronald Hendel was exactly right when he said, "Archaeological research has-against the intentions of most of its practitioners-secured the nonhistoricity of much of the Bible before the era of kings."262 We can now expand Hendel's observation and affirm that there is not much history to be found in the era of kings either.

To see the depth of the despair, consider the ideas of a premier young archaeologist today, Andrew Vaughn. To avoid the impending final doom, Vaughn suggests a renewed integration of biblical history and archaeology with more imaginative and narrative theologies. Vaughn warns: "If we as archaeologists and historians do not undertake such a task, it may not be impossible to write a history of Israel today, but the resulting history will be ignored by the larger audience that desires a theological payoff."263 Thus, we are back to the use of archaeology as a handmaiden of theology, which helped to get archaeology into its own cinerarium in the first place.

So does biblical archaeology matter anymore? Let's recall Dever's statement once more, "If the actual history of the Biblical world no longer matters, then archaeology is clearly irrelevant."264 Phrased alternatively we achieve the same result: Since archaeology has failed to reveal much biblical history that matters, biblical archaeology, even in Dever's broader vision, not only has ceased to be relevant but it has ceased to exist as we knew it. Instead of revealing biblical history, archaeology has provided a fundamental argument to move beyond the Bible itself. If, as Vaughn would have it, biblical archaeology has to serve theology once more to be relevant, its days as a secular academic field are numbered. Either way, biblical archaeology ended in ruins-literally, socially, and metaphorically.

NOTES

1. William G. Dever, "Death of a Discipline," Biblical Archaeology Review 21, no. 5 (September/October 1995): 50-55, 70; quote is from p. 51. For a broader treatment on the demise of biblical archaeology, see Thomas W. Davis, Shifting Sands: The Rise and Fall of Biblical Archaeology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

2. Ronald S. Hendel, "Is There a Biblical Archaeology?" BAR 32, no. 4 (July/August 2006): 20.

3. William G. Dever, "Whatchamacallit," BAR 29, no. 4 (July/August 2003): 60.

4. For Albright, see Burke O. Long, Planting and Reaping Albright: Politics, Ideology, and Interpreting the Bible (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Peter Machinist, "William Foxwell Albright: The Man and His Work," in The Study of the Ancient Near East in the Twenty-first Century: The William Foxwell Albright Centennial Conference, ed. Jerrold S. Cooper and Glenn M. Schwartz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), pp. 385-403; Leona Glidden Running and David Noel Freedman, William Foxwell Albright: A Twentieth-Century Genius (New York: Two Continents, 1975).

5. See Philip King, "American Archaeologists," in Benchmarks in Time and Culture: Essays in Honor of Joseph A. Callaway, ed. Joel F. Drinkard, Gerald L. Mattingly, and J. Maxwell Miller (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), pp. 15-35.

6. "Syro-Palestinian archaeology" is a label promoted by Dever. See W. G. Dever, "Syro-Palestinian and Biblical Archaeology," in The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters, ed. D. A. Knight and G. M. Tucker (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), pp. 31-74. In his most recent description of the relationship between biblical and Syro-Palestinian archaeology, Dever (Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005], p. 80) says: "`Syro-Palestinian' archaeology, as it is now commonly called, has been a separate, professional, secular discipline-freed at last to conduct a dialogue with biblical studies, no longer one of two monologues. The term `biblical archaeology' now designates only the dialogue

between archaeology and biblical studies ..." Italics are Dever's.

7. Dever, "Death of a Discipline," p. 53. Italics are Dever's. For a more optimistic view of archaeology in areas other than those tied to ancient Israel or the Bible, see Brian Fagan, "The Next Fifty Years: Will It Be the Golden Age of Archaeology?" Archaeology 59, no. 5 (September/October 2006): 18-23. Whether intentionally or not, Fagan does not give more than a passing comment to lands remotely related to the Bible (e.g., Egypt and Mesopotamia), and nothing about biblical archaeology whatsoever.

8. For Newton and Leibniz, see A. Rupert Hall, Philosophers at War: The Quarrel between Newton and Leibniz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). For Hume and Rousseau, see David Edmonds and John Eidinow, Rousseau's Dog: Two Great Thinkers at War in the Age of Enlightenment (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).

9. Nicole J. Grant, "From Margaret Mead's Field Notes: What Counted as `Sex' in Samoa?" American Anthropologist 97, no. 4 (1995): 678-82; Derek Freeman, Margaret Mead and the Heretic (New York: Penguin, 1996); Lowell Holmes, Quest for the Real Samoa: The Mead/Freeman Controversy and Beyond (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1987).

10. Stephen L. Dyson, "From New to New Age Archaeology: Archaeological Theory and Classical Archaeology-A 1990s Perspective," AJA 97 (1992): 197.

11. Representative works on this conflict include Paul R. Gross and Norman Levitt, Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Kurt Hubner, Critique of Scientific Reason, trans. Paul R. Dixon Jr. and Hollis M. Dixon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Allan Megill, Rethinking Objectivity (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Gerald Holton, Science and Anti-Science (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

12. Dever, Did God Have a Wife? p. xi.

13. See, for example, Lester L. Grabbe, ed., Can a "History of Israel" Be Written? JSOTSup 245 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); John

J. Collins, The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

14. For some reviews of postmodernism, see David Detmer, Challenging Postmodernism: Philosophy and the Politics of Truth (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2003); Charles C. Lemert, Postmodernism Is Not What You Think (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); Terry Eagleton, The Illusion of Postmodernism (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996). For a more wide-ranging critique, see the essays in Daphne Patai and Will H. Corral, ed., Theory's Empire: An Anthology of Dissent (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

15. JeanFrancois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. xxiv. In French: "En simplifiant a 1'extreme, on tient pour `postmoderne' l'incredulite a 1'egard des metarecits." Lyotard himself credits Americans with initiating the terminology when he states (The Postmodern Condition, p. xxiii), "The word is in current use on the American continent among sociologists and critics." In French: "Le mot est en usage sur le continent americain, sous la plume de sociologues et de critiques." Our French quotes are from the original, JeanFrancois Lyotard, La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979), p. 7.

16. Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in NineteenthCentury Europe (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 429.

17. See William G. Dever, "Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey," BAR 26, no. 2 (March/April 2000): 28-36, 68-69.

18. Niels Peter Lemche and Thomas L. Thomson, "Did Biran Kill David? The Bible in the Light of Archaeology," TSOT 64 (1994): 19.

19. William G. Dever, "Some Methodological Reflections on Chronology and History-Writing," in The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science, ed. Thomas E. Levy and Thomas Higham (London: Equinox, 2006), p. 414.

20. Dever, Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?

(Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 142.

21. For one accessible discussion, see Philip Davies, "Minimalism, `Ancient Israel,' and Antisemitism," The Bible and Interpretation (2000), at http://www .bibleinterp.com/articles/Minimalism.htm, and William G. Dever, "Contra Davies," The Bible and Interpretation (2003), at http://www.bibleinterp .com/articles/Contra -Davies.htm. For an earlier discussion, see Philip Davies, "What Separates a Minimalist from a Maximalist?" BAR 26, no. 2 (March/April 2000): 24-27, 72-73.

22. William G. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel (Grand Rapids: MI: Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 97-99.

23. Ibid., p. 101.

24. Dever, "Contra Davies."

25. For some representative works from more evangelical perspectives, see David Howard Jr. and Michael A. Grisanti, eds., Giving the Sense: Understanding and Using the Old Testament Historical Texts (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2003); Ian Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, A Biblical History of Israel (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003); V. Philips Long, David W. Baker, and Gordon J. Wenham, Windows into Old Testament History: Evidence, Argument, and the Crisis of "Biblical Israel" (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

26. Equally appropriate might be "crypto-minimalist," as argued by Philip Davies, "Crypto-Minimalism," Journal of Semitic Studies 50, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 117-36.

27. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 70.

28. Ibid., p. 71.

29. For Dever's own discussion of positivism, see ibid., p. 25.; Dever, "Archaeology, Ideology, and the Quest for an `Ancient' or 'Biblical' Israel," NEA 61, no. 1 (1998): 40-41. Note also this statement (What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 266): "In the remainder of this chapter, I shall adopt a working model

of `neo-pragmatism' myself, in order to point to a better way to approach the reality of `ancient Israel' and to suggest ways of appropriating its meaning for us today. If this is positivism, so be it." Likewise, Leo G. Perdue (Reconstructing Old Testament Theology after the Collapse of History [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005], p. 8) describes the historical-critical method usually applied by biblical scholars as "normally grounded in philosophical positivism." W. F. Albright ("Eric Voegelin: Order and History," Theological Studies 22, no. 2 [June 1961]: 279) also summarizes his empiricorationalism thusly: "[T]he writer insists on basing historical research on a combination of empirical and rational methodology."

30. For the idea that positivism can complement idealist and realist philosophical positions, see Bruce G. Trigger, "Archaeology and Epistemology: Dialoguing across the Darwinian Chasm," AJA 102 (1998): 1-34. Trigger, in fact, sees today's philosophical schools as three, "positivism, idealism, and realism" (p. 2). For a history of "positivism" as a term and concept, especially in cultural anthropology, see Paul B. Roscoe, "The Perils of `Positivism' in Cultural Anthropology," American Anthropologist 97, no. 3 (1997): 492-94.

31. We slightly disagree with Philip Davies ("Method and Madness: Some Remarks on Doing History with the Bible," JBL 114 [1995]: 700) when he says, "Positivism strictly speaking, uses natural science as its epistemological model: I know no historian who takes such a line. But in a weaker sense `positivist' is also used of people who believe that knowledge is based on the accumulation of empirical evidence and logical deduction from it." Roscoe ("The Perils of `Positivism'") shows that the equation of positivism with the natural sciences is more historically complicated, and overlooks the fact that scientists may be less positivistic and more hermeneutical than they admit.

32. See Detmer, Challenging Postmodernism, p. 55. Although it is a common objection that empiricorationalism cannot be proven correct by its own criteria, the fact remains that one cannot refute empiricorationalism by using empiricorationalism. Saying that empiricorationalism is wrong on the basis of empirical datum X or logical problem Y presupposes that empirical data and logic do have validity. As such, these refutations of empiricorationalism constitute a case of self-referential incoherence.

33. Compare this definition by Robert Audi (Epistemology: A

Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge, 2nd ed. [New York: Routledge, 2004], p. 251): "[K]nowledge is true belief based in the right way on the right kind of ground." As Audi himself admits, this definition leaves a lot open because it does not really define what the "right way" or "right kind of ground" is. Our definition is explicit in announcing that the right way and right ground is direct verification through the five senses and/or logic. See also Robert K. Shope, The Analysis of Knowing: A Decade of Research (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

34. A. J. Ayer, The Problem of Knowledge (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 35.

35. See Robert K. Shope, The Analysis of Knowing, p. 7. That this general scheme represents Ayer is reaffirmed by Ayer himself in his "Reply to David S. Clarke, Jr.," in The Philosophy of A. J. Ayer, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1992), p. 125.

36. Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" Analysis 23 (1963): 121-23. Ayer responds to Gettier's problems in "Reply to David S. Clarke, Jr.," pp. 125-26.

37. See also Frederic Brandfon, "The Limits of Evidence: Archaeology and Objectivity," Maarav 4 (1987): 5-43.

38. What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 24, n. 2. Dever also cites Windschuttle's work in Who Were the Early Israelites? pp. 143-44. See Keith Windschuttle, The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists Are Murdering Our Past (New York: Free Press, 1996).

39. The idea of self-referential incoherence can be traced as far back as Aristotle. In the first century BCE, a clear exposition is found in Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, trans. and ed. W. H. D. Rouse and M. F. Smith, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 4.469: "Moreover, if anyone thinks that nothing can be known, he does not even know whether that can be known, since he declares that nothing can be known." In Latin: Denique nil sciri siquis putat, id quoque nescit an sciri possit, quoniam nil scire fatetur.

40. On such referential inconsistencies in postmodernism, see Detmer, Challenging Postmodernism, especially pp. 37-65. For an earlier treatment, see

Joseph M. Boyle Jr., "Self-Referential Inconsistency, Inevitable Falsity, and Metaphysical Argumentation," Metaphilosophy 3, no. 1 (January 1972): 25-42.

41. For recent discussions, see Claudia M. Schmidt, David Hume: Reason in History (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Colin Howson, Hume's Problem: Induction and the Justification of Belief (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

42. Windschuttle, The Killing of History, pp. 2 10-11. Windschuttle makes this distinction while critiquing the work of Anthony Giddens, The Consequences of Modernity (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

43. Windschuttle, The Killing of History, p. 211.

44. Ibid., pp. 203-204.

45. Here we are following a variant of the use of protocol sentences, as described by Otto Neurath, "Protocol Sentences," in Logical Positivism, ed. A. J. Ayer (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959), pp.199-208.

46. Windschuttle, The Killing of History, pp. 198-99. See further, Karl Popper, Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 29-30.

47. Karl Popper (Conjectures and Refutations, p. 31) is himself drawing on a discussion of Caesar by David Hume.

48. Michael Parenti, The Assassination of Julius Caesar: A People's History of Ancient Rome (New York: New Press, 2003), p. 252, n. 1.

49. The problems of eyewitness testimony have been extensively studied by Gary Wells of Iowa State University. See especially, Gary A. Wells and Elizabeth Olson, "Eyewitness Identification," Annual Review of Psychology 54 (2003): 277-95. See also the older treatment by Elizabeth Loftus, Eyewitness Testimony (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979). For more philosophical dimensions, see Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa, eds., The Epistemology of Testimony (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); C. A.

J. Coady, Testimony: A Philosophical Study (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Elizabeth Fricker, "Telling and Trusting: Reductionism and Anti-reductionism in the Epistemology of Testimony," Mind 104 (1995): 393-411.

50. Windschuttle, The Killing of History, p. 199.

51. We follow Suetonius, trans. J. C. Rolfe, 2 vols. LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). As is the convention when citing classical sources, we cite Suetonius by its internal divisions rather than by the volume or pages of the LCL edition.

52. Parenti (The Assassination, p. 252, n. 1) is misleading in his summary of Suetonius's Julius Caesar 81 when he says that "Suetonius cites Cornelius Balbus, a close friend of Caesar's, as an eyewitness source: Julius Caesar 81." What Julius Caesar 81 actually says is that Cornelius is the source for Suetonius's statement about Caesar's knowledge of unfavorable omens before the assassination.

53. K. R. Bradley, "The Rediscovery of Suetonius," Classical Philology 80, no. 3 (1985): 254-65.

54. For a list of extant manuscripts, see Suetonius, 1:28-29. For a fuller discussion of the history of transmission of Suetonius and other Roman sources, see L. D. Reynolds, Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). Reynolds does not include discussion of Plutarch, which is in Greek.

55. We follow the Latin-English edition of P. A. Brunt and J. M. Moore, Res Gestae Divi Augusti: The Achievements of the Divine Augustus (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 18-19. In Latin: "Qui parentem meum trucidaverunt, eos in exilium expuli iudiciis legitimis ultus eorum facinus, et postea bellum inferentis rei publicae vici his aci."

56. On the whole issue of legitimizing Augustus Caesar's succession, see the classic treatment of Walter Schmitthener, Oktavian and Das Testament Caesars (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1952). Nonetheless, Schmitthener relies on secondary historians.

57. See James Barr, History and Ideology in the Old Testament: Biblical Studies at the End of a Millennium (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), especially pp. 141-78.

58. Windschuttle, The Killing of History, p. 211.

59. Simon Schama, Dead Certainties: Unwarranted Speculations (New York: Knopf, 1991).

60. Windschuttle, The Killing of History, p. 230. Italics are Windschuttle's.

61. Josephus, The Jewish War, trans. H. St. John Thackeray, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 1.1-2: of pev 61) 7capati1)x6vties tiois va6tv,dkX: &Ko1 EiWiU Kai &GvµOwva 8t117~µatia ypd0o1)6ty, of 7capayev6pcvot 8E ij itpos' Pwµaiovs ij µtcwt ticw 7cp6s ti6)v 7cpayµdtiwv, 7ceptexet 6e oTCOV µWV yopiQV oltov Se eyKwµtov tid 61)yypdppatia, do S' 6KPt(3es Tjs ov8aµov.

62. For Plutarch, I depend on Plutarch's Lives, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, 11 vols., LCL (London: William Heinemann, 1918).

63. C. B. R. Pelling, "Plutarch's Method of Work in the Roman Lives," Journal of Hellenic Studies 99 (1979): 79.

64. For a recent treatment of these speeches, see Thomas Romer, The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical, and Literary Introduction (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 124-25. Dever also recognizes such fictionalized speeches in What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 100.

65. The literature on Israelite ethnicity is enormous, but we may include the following recent representative surveys: Ann E. Killebrew, Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines and Early Israel 1300-1100 BCE (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005); Dever, Who Were the Early Israelites? which actually repeats arguments that we find in Dever's earlier and later works that we will treat at greater length; Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, "Israelite Ethnicity in Iron I: Archaeology Preserves What Is Remembered and What Is Forgotten in Israel's History," JBL 122 (2003): 401-25; Robert D. Miller, II, "Identifying Earliest Israel," BASOR 333

(2004): 55-68; Kenton Sparks, Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998). See also the special issue, "Pots and People" in Biblical Archaeologist 58, no. 4 (December 1995).

66. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 107.

67. Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in NineteenthCentury Europe (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 429. See also, Michel de Certeu, The Writing of History, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

68. William G. Dever, "Contra Davies," The Bible and Interpretation (2003), which can be found online at http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Contra_Davies.htm. Davies's book review appears in Shofar 21, no. 1 (Fall 2002): 158-60.

69. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 118.

70. Dever, "The Contribution of Archaeology to the Study of Canaanite and Early Israelite Religion," in Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Sean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), p. 247, n. 79.

71. For a recent treatment, with earlier bibliography, see Kenneth Kitchen, "The Victories of Merenptah, and the Nature of Their Record," JSOT 28, no. 3 (2004): 259-72. Note that the king's name is also spelled as Merenptah.

72. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 118.

73. For the Picts and their recent identification as a Celtic-language group, see Alistair Moffat, Before Scotland: The Story of Scotland before History (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), pp. 286-302.

74. On the problems of such ethnic constructions, see also Peter S. Wells, Beyond Celts, Germans and Scythians (London: Duckworth, 2001); Patrick J. Geary, The Myth of Nations: Medieval Origins of Europe (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); M. Chapman, The Celts: The Construction of a Myth (New York: St. Martin's, 1992); Florin Curta, The Making of the Slavs:

History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, Ca. 500-700 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

75. For example, John Howe and Michael Wolfe, eds., Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Senses of Place in Western Europe (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002); Katherine Clarke, Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999); Emma Jinhua Teng, Taiwan's Imagined Geography: Chinese Colonial Travel Writing and Pictures 1683-1895 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006). For maps as an instrument of deception, see Mark Monmonier, How to Lie with Maps, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

76. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 118. See further, Niels Peter Lemche, The Canaanites and Their Land (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

77. Anson Rainey, "The Consensus Theory Is Dead," BAS Web site, at http://www.biblicalarchaeology. org/bswb-BAR/Rainey/bswbRaineyM ainPage. asp (accessed August 31, 2006). Regarding the demise of the case for the highlands location of Israel in the Merneptah Stele, Rainey says: "The news just hasn't reached the brains of Dever and the pundits who try to support it."

78. Dever, Who Were the Early Israelites? p. 221.

79. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 125.

80. Ibid., p. 122.

81. Ibid., p. 115: "The Iron I pottery of these hill-country sites, particularly that of the early 12th century, remains strongly in the old LB II local tradition. The direct continuities are clear in nearly all forms, with only the normal, predictable typolog ical developments." For a classic settlement survey of the Israelite highlands, see Israel Finkelstein, The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1988).

82. For an excellent general survey of the Hittites, see Trevor Bryce, The Kingdom of the Hittites (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

83. Dever, Who Were the Early Israelites? p. 195.

84. Gabriel Barkay, "The Iron Age II-III," in The Archaeology of Ancient Israel, ed. Amnon Ben-Tor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

85. Note that on p. 267 of What Did the Biblical Writers Know? Dever speaks of an "increasingly homogenous material culture" around 1000 BCE, but on his chart of convergences on p. 125, he speaks of "some continuities, but increasing diversion from, LB Canaanite culture." Yet, on p. 115, he says Iron I pottery "remains strongly in the old LB II local tradition."

86. Dever, Who Were the Early Israelites? p. 197.

87. Ibid., p. 197.

88. Ian Hodder, Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

89. See, for example, John M. Fritz and Fred T. Plog, "The Nature of Archaeological Explanation," Antiquity 35, no. 4 (1970): 405-12.

90. For some surveys of processualism and its various forms and phases, see Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practices, 3rd ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), pp. 38-48. For an earlier overview of archaeological theory, see Michael Shanks, "Archaeological Theory: What's on the Agenda?" AJA 101 (1997): 395-99.

91. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 66. In an earlier article, Dever ("The Contribution of Archaeology," p. 247, n. 78) described himself thus: `By this stress on behavior, I do not mean necessarily to identify myself with the `behavioralist' or `processualist' schools of current American archaeology. I do mean to side with L. R. Binford ... who regards ideas as beyond the limits of archaeological inquiry." However, James Lett (Science, Reason and Anthropology: The Principles of Rational Inquiry [Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997], p. 11) classifies Binford as a paradigm of the "processualists."

92. Ian Hodder, Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 8.

93. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 128.

94. Geisler and Howe, When Critics Ask, p. 16.

95. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 125.

96. The renowned epigraphist Joseph Naveh (Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Paleography [Jerusalem: Magness, 1982], p. 76) comments: "The script of the Gezer Calendar ... is identical with that of the tenth century Phoenician inscriptions. Moreover, its language does not have any lexical or grammatical features that preclude the possibility of its being Phoenician."

97. Even in his later treatments (Who Were the Early Israelites? p. 192), Dever is adapting the outdated "trait" lists of ethnicity found in Fredrik Barth, ed. Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference (Results of a Symposium held at the University of Bergen 23rd to 26th February, 1967) (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969). For important discussions of the problems of ethnic identification through archaeology, see Sian Jones, The Archaeology of Ethnicity (New York: Routledge, 1997). For a brief but insightful review of current literature on the "Celtic" identification in the archaeological record, see Peter S. Wells, "Who Were the Celts?" AJA 102, no. 4 (October 1998): 814-16. For how pottery and other artifacts could be utilized differently by the Romans and the people with whom they traded, see also M. Erdrich, Rom and die Barbaren: Das Verhaltnis Zwischen dem Imperium Romanum and den germanischen Stammen vor seiner Nordwestgrenze von der spaten romischen Republik bis zum gallischen Sonderreich (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2001).

98. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 121. Italics are Dever's.

99. For a modern study of the flexibility of Jewish identity, see Eric Goldstein, The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006). For primordialism, see the older but still useful overview by Richard H. Thompson, Theories of Ethnicity: A Critical Appraisal (New York: Greenwood, 1989), especially pp. 54-69.

100. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 42.

101. See Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, "An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan," IEJ 43, nos. 2-3 (1993): 81-98; Biran and Naveh, "The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment," IEJ 45, no. 1 (1995): 1-18. For a convenient comprehensive treatment, see George Athas, The Tel Dan Inscription: A Reappraisal and a New Interpretation (London: T&T Clark, 2005). Nonetheless, the work of Athas must be read with caution, given the incisive reviews of William Schniedewind (http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/3275_3685.pdf) in 2003 and Nadav Na'Aman (http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/3275_3960.pdf) in 2004, both in Review of Biblical Literature, which can be viewed at http://www.bookreviews.org (accessed September 10, 2006).

102. For a recent discussion of David, see David A. Bosworth, "Evaluating King David: Old Problems and Recent Scholarship," CBQ 68, no. 2 (2006): 191-210; Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition (New York: Free Press, 2006); David McKenzie, King David: A Biography (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Baruch Halpern, David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer Traitor King (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).

103. Thomas L. Thompson, "Dissonance and Disconnections: Notes on the BYTDWD and HMLK.HDD Fragments from Tel Dan," SJOT 9, no. 2 (1995): 237.

104. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? pp. 128-29. Dever's citation of line 8 is found in a caption to the photograph on p. 129.

105. For the list of biblical names with RM, usually meaning "exalted," see Martin Noth, Die Israelitischen Personennamen in Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1980), pp. 145-46.

106. K. L. Noll, "The God Who Is among the Danites," JSOT 80 (1998): 9.

107. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 167.

108. For a convenient survey of the proposed interpretations, see Athas, The Tel Dan Inscription, pp. 217-26.

109. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 167.

110. Ibid., p. 107.

111. Ibid., p. 167.

112. David Hume, Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning Principles and Morals, ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), p. 96: "[T]here is no method of reasoning more common, and yet none more blameable than, in philosophical disputes, to endeavour the refutation of hypothesis by a pretence of its dangerous consequences to religion or morality." Another version of this utilitarianism is found in the evangelical work of Provan, Long, and Longman (A Biblical History of Israel, especially pp. 54-56), where the authors devalue insistence on "verificationism" for "a benefit-of-the-doubt' approach we have already critiqued. Usually, of course, Evangelicals don't often wish to apply this approach to the texts of other religions. Otherwise, the discussion by Provan, Long, and Longman only betrays the fact that we can know very little about the past without resorting to special pleading.

113. See also Gary N. Knoppers, "The Vanishing Solomon: The Disappearance of the United Monarchy from Recent Histories of Ancient Israel," JBL 116 (1997): 19-44.

114. William G. Dever, Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), p. 106.

115. Ibid., p. 91: "But the same soundings also revealed another large casemated residence and proved that beneath the misdated offsets-insets wall lay the true casemate (i.e., double) wall corresponding to the Solomonic gate." He also used the word "verified" in Shalom Paul and William G. Dever, Biblical Archaeology (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co., 1974), p. 99.

116. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 132. Italics are Dever's. As we note further below, this seems to contradict an earlier published stance on how late we could date such pottery.

117. Ibid., p. 132.

118. Ibid., p. 133.

119. See, for example, Timothy Harrison, Megiddo 3: Final Report of the Stratum VI Excavations (Chicago: University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, 2004). Finkelstein provided a scathing review of that report, to which Timothy Harrison responded in "Finkelstein's Review `Seriously Misinterprets' My Book," BAR 32, no. 2 (March/April 2006): 15, 78.

120. See G. E. Wright, "[Review of] Megiddo, Volume 2: Seasons of 1935-39. By the Megiddo Expedition, Gordon Loud, Field Director," JAOS 70 (1950): 59-60.

121. See Dever's What Did the Biblical Writers Know? pp. 132-33, and his Recent Archaeological Discoveries, p. 88, table 4.

122. Dever, Recent Archaeological Discoveries, p. 91.

123. Dever, "Social Structure in Palestine in the Iron II Period on the Eve of Destruction," in The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land, ed. Thomas Levy (London: Leicester University Press, 1998), p. 423.

124. A. Kempinski and R. Reich, eds., The Architecture of Ancient Israel from the Prehistoric to the Persian Periods (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1992).

125. Dever, "Some Methodological Reflections," p. 419.

126. See Thomas E. Levy and Thomas Higham, eds., The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science (London: Equinox, 2005).

127. Norma Franklin, "Correlation and Chronology: Samaria and Megiddo Redux," in Levy and Higham, The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating, p. 314. See also Norma Franklin, "Revealing Stratum V at Megiddo," BASOR 342 (2006): 95-111.

128. Franklin, "Samaria and Megiddo Redux," p. 320. Franklin's work would also contradict that of Timothy Harrison ("The Battleground: Who Destroyed Megiddo? Was It David or Shishak?" BAR 29, no. 6 [November/December 2006]: 28-36, 60, 62), whose own reexamination of the Chicago excavation reports leads him to conclude that Stratum VA-IVB was destroyed by Shishak, and so it is Solomonic.

129. Gabriel Barkay, "The Iron Age II-III," in The Archaeology of Ancient Israel, ed. Amnon Ben-Tor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 307.

130. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 132.

131. Dever, "Further Evidence on the Date of the Outer Wall at Gezer," BASOR 289 (1993): 36. See also the response of Israel Finkelstein, "Penelope's Shroud Unravelled: Iron II Date of Gezer's Outer Wall Established," Tel Aviv 21 (1994): 276-82. Further exchanges include Finkelstein, "Gezer Revisited and Revised," Tel Aviv 29 (2002): 262-96; Dever, "Visiting the Real Gezer: A Reply to Israel Finkelstein," Tel Aviv (2003): 259-82.

132. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 132.

133. Halpern, David's Secret Demons, pp. 463-64, and his table on p. 477. See also John Holladay, "Red Slip, Burnish, and the Solomonic Gateway at Gezer," BASOR 277/78 (1990): 23-70.

134. Franklin, "Samaria and Megiddo Redux," p. 313.

135. Among many who affirm this is David Ussishkin ("Gate 1567 at Megiddo and the Seal of Shema," in Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip King, ed. Michael D. Coogan and J. Cheryl Exum [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994], p. 424): "[T]he pottery assemblage of Stratum VA-IVB, in particular the red-slipped, irregularly burnished pottery, is to be dated to later than the reign of Solomon. This conclusion is significant as the pottery assemblage of Stratum VA-IVB serves as a cornerstone in the study of Iron Age pottery in northern Israel."

136. For overviews of Tell Beit Mirsim, see William F. Albright, "Beit Mirsim, Tell," in Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land, 4 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1975-78); Raphael Greenberg, "Beit Mirsim, Tell," The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East, ed. Eric M. Meyers, 5 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1:295-97.

137. For example, William Ward ("The Present Status of Egyptian Chronology," BASOR 288 [1992]: 55) comments: "These dates are well nigh universally accepted and can all be ascertained by synchronisms with Assyrian

kings, as can the sack of Jerusalem by Sheshonq I in the fifth year of Rehoboam King of Judah."

138. For a reassessment of the Medinet Habu evidence, see Robert Drews, "Medinet Habu, Oxcarts, Ships, and Migration Theories," JNES 59, no. 3 (2000): 161-90.

139. Walter E. Rast, Taanach I: Studies in the Iron Age Pottery (Cambridge, MA: ASOR, 1978), p. 4.

140. Albright, "Beit Mirsim, Tell," p. 177.

141. See Moshe Kochavi, "Khirbet Rabud = Debir," Tel Aviv 1, no. 1 (1974): 2-33.

142. An excellent illustration and lucid analysis of the Shishak Stele is now available in Anson Rainey and R. Steven Notley, The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006), pp. 186-89.

143. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? pp. 135-36; the map is on p. 136.

144. Ilan Sharon's review of Dever's What Did the Biblical Writers Know? appears in BAR 29, no. 3 (May/June 2003): 60, 62-63. For similar uncharitable criticisms of Dever's book Did God Have a Wife? see Shmuel Ahituv, "Did God Really Have a Wife?" BAR 32, no. 5 (September/October 2006): 62-66.

145. W. G. Dever, H. D. Lance, and G. E. Wright, eds., Gezer I: Preliminary Report of the 1964-66 Seasons, Annual of the Hebrew Union College Biblical and Archaeological School in Jerusalem (Jerusalem: Jewish Institute of Religion, 1970), p. 5. Note that even John Holladay ("Red Slip, Burnish, and the Solomonic Gateway at Gezer," pp. 24-70) acknowledges that the destruction at issue should be dated to the time of Shishak on the basis of 1 Kings 9:16. As Holladay (p. 24) phrases it, "Further, it seems reasonable to attribute the prior destruction of Gezer to the reign of King Solomon (1 Kgs 9:16)."

146. Dever et al., Gezerl, p. 5, n. 20.

147. One who doubts that reading is Raphael Giveon, "Remarks on Some

Egyptian Toponym Lists Concerning Canaan," in Festschrift Elmar Edel, 12 Mdrz 1979, ed. Manfred Georg and Edgar B. Pusch (Bamberg: M. Gorg, 1979), p. 136. Rainey and Notley (The Sacred Bridge, p. 186: The Upper Register, line 12) also indicate uncertainty about the word "Gezer" in that part of the inscription. For a recent detailed review of Shishak's campaign, see also Jose Lull Garcia, "En torno a la campana palestina de Sheshonq," Aula Orientalis 19 (2001): 225-44. For support of the reading of "Gezer," see Nadav Na' aman, "Israel, Edom, and Egypt in the 10th Century B.C.E.," Tel Aviv 19, no. 1 (1992): 71-88.

148. In What Did the Biblical Writers Know? Dever's stance on this red-slipped pottery also seems to contradict an earlier flexibility toward later dates. When reviewing the excavations of Tel Masos in southern Israel, Dever ("Archaeology and Israelite Origins: Review Article," BASOR 279 [1990]: 95, n. 1) remarked: "This is already happening with red-slipped wares, which since Albright's day have been regarded as typical of mid-to-late tenth century B.C., but are now dated by several Israeli archaeologists all the way from the 11th to the 9th century B.C."

149. Baruch Halpern, "Erasing History: The Minimalist Assault on Ancient Israel," BR 11, no. 6 (1995): 33.

150. David Ussishkin, "King's Solomon's Palace and Building 1723 in Megiddo," IEJ 16, no. 3 (1966): 174-86.

151. Ibid., p. 174.

152. Ibid.

153. David Ussishkin, "Solomon's Jerusalem: The Text and the Facts on the Ground," in Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period, ed. Andrew G. Vaughn and Ann E. Killebrew (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), p. 112.

154. Ussishkin, "King's Solomon's Palace," p. 181.

155. Ibid., p. 179. We have adapted Ussishkin's list by adding numbers to facilitate understanding.

156. For a brief but incisive discussion of the problems associated with arguments based on Bit Hilani plans, see Raz Kletter, "Chronology of the United Monarchy: A Methodological Review," ZDPV 120 (2004): 39-40.

157. Norma Franklin, "Correlation and Chronology: Samaria and Megiddo Redux," in Levy and Higham, The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating, p. 321.

158. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 150.

159. Andre Lemaire, "Probable Head of Priestly Scepter from Solomon's Temple Surfaces in Jerusalem," BAR 10, no. 1 (January/February 1984): 24-29.

160. Ibid., p. 29. Cross's views are provided in a sidebox.

161. See Yuval Goren *et al.* "A Reexamination of the Inscribed Pomegranate from the Israel," IEJ55, no. 1 (2005): 3-21; Yuval Goren et al., "Authenticity Examination of Two Iron Age Ostraca from the Moussaief Collection," IEJ 55, no. 1 (2005): 21-35; Israel Eph'al and Joseph Naveh, "Remarks on the Recently Published Moussaieff Ostraca," IEJ 48 (1998): 269-73; C. A. Rollston, "Non-Provenanced Epigraphs I: Pillaged Antiquities, Northwest Semitic Forgeries, and Protocols for Laboratory Tests," Maarav 10 (2003): 145-46.

162. For Dever's own account of this prank, see What Did the Biblical Writers Know? pp. 251-52.

163. Alan Sokal, "Transgressing Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," Social Text 46/47 (1996): 217-52. See also his admission in Alan Sokal, "A Physicist Experiments with Cultural Studies," Lingua Franca (1996): 62-64.

164. Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals'Abuse of Science (New York: Picador USA, 1998). Sokal was inspired by an earlier antirelativist work by Paul R. Gross and Norman Levitt, Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

165. Nachman Ben-Yehuda, Sacrificing Truth: Archaeology and the Myth of Masada (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2002).

166. For one recent debate, this one involving the possibility that Morton Smith, a controversial biblical scholar, forged the so-called Secret Gospel of Mark, see Scott G. Brown, "The Question of Motive in the Case against Morton Smith," JBL 125 (2006): 351-83; Stephen C. Carlson, The Gospel Hoax: Morton Smith's Invention of Secret Mark (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005); and Robert M. Price, "Second Thoughts on the Secret Gospel," Bulletin of Biblical Research 14, no. 1 (2004): 127-32, which is available online at http://www.robertmprice .mindvendor.com/secret.htm (accessed September 10, 2006).

167. For a recent survey of such forgeries, see "Forum: Fakes, Forgeries, and Biblical Scholarship," NEA 68, nos. 1-2 (March-June 2005 [appeared 2006]): 61-77.

168. For some of his most recent archaeological work, see Oscar White Muscarella, "The Excavations at Hasanlu," BASOR 342 (2006): 69-94.

169. Oscar White Muscarella, The Lie Became Great: The Forgery of Ancient Near Eastern Cultures (Groningen: Styx, 2000), p. 1. For an excellent discussion of how museum economics and traditions often conflict with academia, see the collection of essays in Charles W. Haxthausen, ed., The Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

170. For the Getty Museum situation, see Peter Watson and Cecilia Todeschini, The Medici Conspiracy: Organized Crime, Looted Antiquities, Rogue Museums (New York: Public Affairs, 2006).

171. Raz Kletter, "A Very General Archaeologist: Moshe Dayan and Israeli Archaeology," Journal of the Hebrew Scriptures 4 (2003), available at http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/Articles/article-27.pdf (accessed August 28, 2006).

172. For an English translation of the indictment, see http://www.biblical archaeology.org/bswbOOossuary_indictment.pdf (accessed August 28, 2006).

173. See also Jodi Magness, "Ossuaries and the Burials of Jesus and James,"

JBL 124 (2005): 121-54.

174. For one of Golan's accounts, see Hershel Shanks, "Cracks in the James Bone Box Repaired," BAR 29, no. 1 (January/February 2003): 20-25. For a more comprehensive account in support of authenticity, see Hershel Shanks and Ben Witherington III, The Brother of Jesus (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003). The best way to keep informed is actually on the Biblical Archaeology Society Web site at http://www.bib-arch.org/bswbOOossuary_01debate.asp.

175. For scholarly discussions of this situation, see Edward M. Cook, "The Forgery Indictments and BAR: Learning from Hindsight," at http://www.sblsite .org/Article.aspx?ArticleId=371.

176. See Andrew Vaughn and Christopher A. Rollston, "The Antiquities Market, Sensationalized Textual Data and Modern Forgeries," NEA 68, nos. 1-2 (2005): 61-65.

177. F. M. Cross, "Notes on a Forged Plaque Recording Repairs to the Temple," IEJ 53 (2003): 119-23. See also Israel Eph'al, "`The Jehoash Inscription': A Forgery," IEJ 53, no. 1 (2003): 124-28.

178. See David Noel Freedman, "Don't Rush to Judgment: Jehoash Inscription May Be Authentic," Biblical Archaeology Society Web site, http://www.biblical archaeology.org/bswbOOossuary_freedman.asp (accessed August 7, 2006).

179. Pierre Boudreuil, Felice Israel, and Dennis Pardee, "King's Command and Widow's Plea: Two New Hebrew Ostraca of the Biblical Period," NEA 61, no. 1 (March 1998): 2-13.

180. See this alleged forging procedure under "count no. 3" at http://www.biblical archaeology.org/bswbOOossuary_indictment.pdf (accessed August 28, 2006).

181. Hershel Shanks, "The Editor of BAR Responds," NEA 68, nos. 1-2 (2005): 74.

182. For a discussion of these methodological problems, especially with regard to the dating of Hebrew seals, see Andrew G. Vaughn, "Paleographic

Dating of Judean Seals and Its Significance for Biblical Research," BASOR 313 (1999): 43-64.

183. See http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/bswbOOunprovenancedresponse.html (accessed August 6, 2006).

184. See http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/bswbOOunprovenancedstatement .html/ (accessed August 6, 2006).

185. Raz Kletter, "Pots and Polities: Material Remains of Late Iron Age Judah in Relation to Its Political Borders," BASOR 314 (1999): 19-53. Kletter ("Chronology of the United Monarchy: A Methodological Review," ZDPV 120 [2004]: 13-54) has moved from using the term "state" to using the term "kingdom," but our objections would remain the same in terms of how he uses material objects to identify the boundaries of Judah, whether it be as a kingdom or as a state.

186. Kletter, "Pots and Polities," pp. 27-28.

187. Ibid.

188. Note that Kletter uses the spelling "Judaean," but we use the American spelling "Judean," following Rainey and Notley, The Sacred Bridge.

189. Kletter, "Pots and Polities," p. 28.

190. Ibid., p. 29.

191. As Ryan Byrne ("Lie Back and Think of Judah: The Reproductive Politics of Pillar Figurines," BA 67, no. 3 [2004]: 139) observes: "It should be noted, however, that many figurines are not datable due to the sizeable number originating from uncontrolled twentieth-century excavations." Nonetheless, Byrne also sees these figurines as a Judean phenomenon of the eight to seventh centuries.

192. Kletter, "Pots and Polities," p. 29.

193. Ibid.

193. Ibid.

194. See also H. Darrell Lance, "Stamps, Royal Jar Handle," ABD 6:184-85.

195. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 93. Dever's transcription would make the word "capital" even a more plausible translation instead of the more ambiguous word that is actually present.

196. Kristin A. Swanson, "A Reassessment of Hezekiah's Reform in Light of Jar Handles, and Iconographic Evidence," CBQ 64 (2002): 460-69; Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, "Temple and Dynasty: Hezekiah, the Remaking of Judah, and the Rise of the Pan-Israelite Ideology," JSOT 30, no. 3 (2006): 259-85; Oded Borowski, "Hezekiah's Reforms and the Revolt against Assyria," BA 58, no. 3 (September 1995): 148-55; Nadav Na'aman, "Hezekiah's Fortified Cities and the LMLK Stamp," BASOR 261 (1986): 5-21. For Sennacherib's conquest, see the older but still useful treatment of David Ussishkin, The Conquest of Lachish by Sennacherib (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1982).

197. Kletter, "Pots and Polities," p. 38.

198. Keith Whitelam, The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 1.

199. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 37. For a defense against the charge of Zionism, see p. 9, n. 14.

200. Nadia Abu El-Haj, Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). Note also the work of scholars who see the Native American experience as more akin to the Canaanites, who were oppressed by the Israelites. Such scholars also see the Bible and archaeology used to perpetuate oppression of Native Americans. See also Robert Allen Warrior, "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," Union Seminary Quarterly Review 59, nos. 1-2 (2005): 1-8; Warrior, "Responses to Special Issue on Religion and Narratives of Conquest," Union Seminary Quarterly Review 59, nos. 1-2 (2005): 125-30.

201. Alan Dershowitz, The Case for Israel (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2003), p. 15.

202. Martin Gilbert, The Routledge Atlas of the Arab-Israeli Conflict (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 1.

203. W. F. Albright, "The Phenomenon of Israeli Archaeology," in Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century: Essays in Honor of Nelson Glueck, ed. James A. Sanders (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), p. 61.

204. Kletter, "Pots and Polities," p. 43, quoting Colin Renfrew, Approaches to Social Archaeology (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 37.

205. Anson Rainey, "Historical Geography," in Benchmarks in Time and Culture: Essays in Honor of Joseph A. Callaway, ed. Joel F. Drinkard, Gerald L. Mattingly, and J. Maxwell Miller (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), p. 353.

206. Anson Rainey, "Who Is a Canaanite? A Review of the Textual Evidence," BASOR 304 (1996): 4.

207. Tel Masos also represents a case for Dever's fairness, because Juan Manuel Tebes, the winner of the 2003 Sean Dever Memorial Prize, named for Dever's son, concluded that "the population of Tel Masos was not Israelite." See Juan Manuel Tebes, "A New Analysis of the Iron Age I `Chiefdom' of Tel Masos (Beersheba Valley)," Aula Orientalis 21 (2003): 63-78. I have capitalized letters that Tebes, being a Spanish writer, does not capitalize in English. Dever had suggested ("Archaeology and Israelite Origins," p. 89) that Tel Masos "may represent one of the few actual `early Israelite' villages that have come to light, possibly the `Hormah' of Num[bers] 14:45," but he now admits (Who Were the Early Israelites? pp. 78-79) that it might even be an "Amalekite (a non-Israel site)" that looks like a typical Israelite site.

208. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 126.

209. Dever, "Social Structure in Palestine," p. 420.

210. Anthony W. Marx, Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 8.

211. Ibid., p. 22.

212. My narrative about Thomsen depends on that of Glyn Daniel, A

Hundred and Fifty Years of Archaeology (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 41-42 and Daniel, A Hundred and Fifty Years of Archaeology, p. 40.

213. We follow Amnon Ben-Tor, ed., The Archaeology of Ancient Israel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 2.

214. Amihai Mazar, "The Iron I," in The Archaeology of Ancient Israel, ed. Amnon Ben-Tor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 259.

215. Gabriel Barkay, "The Iron Age II-III," in Ben-Tor, The Archaeology of Ancient Israel, pp. 304-305.

216. Ibid., p. 305.

217. Ibid.

218. Philip R. Davies, "`House of David' Built on Sand: The Sins of the Biblical Maximizers," BAR 20, no. 4 (July/August 1994): 55.

219. See Lemche and Thompson, "Did Biran Kill David?" p. 18.

220. There is at least one detailed comparison of Israelite and English monarchs (1133-1603) by David Noel Freedman ("Kingly Chronologies: Then and Later," Eretz-Israel 24 [1993]: 42-65), but that study aims to show that the Bible bears similarities to English kings in terms of the age of accession to kingship and the length of reigns, among other features. The whole exercise is meant to show that Israelite kings are depicted realistically.

221. Dever, What Did the Biblical Authors Know? pp. 268-69.

222. See also Abraham Wasserstein and David J. Wasserstein, The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Moses Hadas, ed. Aristeas to Philocrates (New York: Ktav, 1988).

223. Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman, eds., King Arthur and the Myth of History (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004), p. 2.

224. For a fundamental and detailed study of Arthurian sources, see Roger Sherman Loomis, ed., Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959). This study should be updated with H. J. Higham, King Arthur: Myth-Making and History (London: Routledge, 2002) and Finke and Shichtman, King Arthur and the Myth of History. For a convenient English collection of sources on Arthurian materials, see Richard White, King Arthur in Legend and History (New York: Routledge, 1997). All our quotations are from this source unless noted otherwise.

225. For the dating of Nennius's works, see Higham, Myth-Making and History, pp. 121-24.

226. Loomis, Arthurian Literature, p. 8.

227. The Annals are part of a group of documents called the Historical Miscellany, which are now housed in the British Museum. See Kathleen Hughes, "The Welsh Latin Chronicles: Annales Cambriae and Related Texts," Proceedings of the British Academy 59 (1973): 233-58; David Dumville, Histories and PseudoHistories of the Insular Middle Ages (Aldershot, UK: Variorum, 1990), especially pp. 176-77.

228. White, King Arthur in Legend and History, p. 6.

229. Ibid. Other sources place the dates for the battle of Badon at 518 and the battle of Camlann at 539.

230. Higham, Myth-Making and History, p. 216.

231. On Layamon's contribution, see Andrew Galloway, "La[y]amon's Gift," PMLA 121, no. 2 (May 2006): 717-34.

232. William of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum (The History of English Kings), ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998). See also Robert M. Stein, "Making History English: Cultural Identity and Historical Explanation in William of Malmesbury and La[g]amon's Brut," in Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages, ed. Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), pp. 97-115.

233. Finke and Shichtman, King Arthur and the Myth of History, p. 22.

234. Ibid.

235. Baruch Halpern, The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 3.

236. Josh McDowell, The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 1:13.

237. R. N. Whybray, "What Do We Know about Ancient Israel?" in Israel's Past in Present Research: Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography, ed. V. Philips Long (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), p. 184. See also the response to Whybray in the same volume by Philip R. Davies, "`Ancient Israel' and History: A Response to Norman Whybray," pp. 188-9 1.

238. Finke and Shichtman, King Arthur and the Myth of History, p. 23. In Latin: bene gesta,quantam cognoscere potui, sine fuco palam efferam; perperam acta, quantum sufficiat scientiae, leviter et quasi transeunter attingam; ut nec mendax culpetur historia, nec illum nota inuram censoria cujus cuncta pene, etsi non laudari, excusari certe possunt opera.

239. Finke and Shichtman, King Arthur and the Myth of History, p. 24.

240. William of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum, 1:26.

241. Finke and Shichtman, King Arthur and the Myth of History, p. 38.

242. See also C. N. L. Brooke, "Geoffrey of Monmouth as Historian," in Church and Government in the Middle Ages, ed. C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin, and D. Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 77-91; Dumville, Histories and PseudoHistories of the Insular Middle Ages.

243. For a skeptical treatment of these lists, see Paul S. Ash, "Solomon's? District? List," JSOT 67 (1995): 67-86.

244. Michael Coogan, "Assessing David & Solomon: From the Hypothetical to the Improbable to the Absurd," BAR 24, no. 4 (July/August 2006): 60.

245. Ibid.

246. See White, King Arthur in Legend and History, p. 55.

247. Sir Thomas Malory, Le Morte D'Arthur, ed. Janet Cowen (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1983), 1:20-21.

248. Eugene Vinaver, ed., The Works of Sir Thomas Malory (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

249. Vinaver, The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, 1:xxx.

250. Takako Kato, Caxton's Morte Darthur: The Printing Process and the Authenticity of the Text, Medium Aevum Monographs, n.s. 22 (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Language and Literature, 2002).

251. Ibid. For a good earlier overview of critiques of Vinaver, see R. M. Lumiansky, "Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte Darthur, 1947-1987: Author, Title, Text," Speculum 62, no. 4 (1987): 878-97.

252. See Finke and Schichtman, King Arthur and the Myth of History, pp. 37-38; John Gillingham, "The Context and Purposes of Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain," Anglo-Norman Studies 13 (1991): 99-118; James Noble, "Patronage, Politics, and the Figure of Arthur in Geoffrey of Monmouth's, Wace, and Layamon," Arthurian Yearbook 2 (1992): 158-78; Colin Kidd, British Identity before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World 1600-1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Stein, "Making History English: Cultural Identity and Historical Explanation in William of Malmesbury and La[g]amon's Brut," pp. 97-115. For an older but still influential treatment of the origin of nationalist traditions, see Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

253. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? p. 107.

254. Leslie Alcock, Arthur's Britain: History and Archaeology, A.D. 367-634 (London: Penguin, 1989); Dumville, Histories and PseudoHistories of the Insular Middle Ages.

255. Elizabeth Jenkins, The Mystery of King Arthur (New York: Dorset, 1990), p. 33.

256. Dever, What Did the Biblical Authors Know? pp. 268-69.

257. See also Terryl L. Givens, By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); David Persuitte, Joseph Smith and the Origins of the Book of Mormon (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2000).

258. See Dever, What Did the Biblical Authors Know? p. 151, caption.

259. Dever, "The Western Cultural Tradition at Risk," BAR 32, no. 2 (2006): 26. Dever signaled a complete capitulation in a recent interview (Hershel Shanks, "Losing Faith," BAR 33, no. 2 [March/April, 2007]: 54) when he said, "I wrote to frustrate Biblical minimalists; then I became one of them."

260. Dever, "Material Remains and the Cult in Ancient Israel: An Essay in Archaeological Systematics," in The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of Sixtieth-Birthday, ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O. Connor (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), p. 571.

261. We adapt the list and approximate dates from Halpern, "Erasing History," BR 11, no. 6 (1995): 30.

262. Hendel, "Is There a Biblical Archaeology," p. 20.

263. Andrew G. Vaughn, "Can We Write a History of Israel Today?" in The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions, ed. James K. Hoffineier and Alan Millard (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 385.

264. Dever, "Death of a Discipline," p. 53.

Chapter 4

THE UNHISTORICAL JESUS

biblical f studies has ended or should end, then we cannot end our treatment without evaluating the success of research into the central character of the entire Christian Bible. While the search for Abraham, Jacob, and Moses is now dead in academia, the search for the "historical" Jesus seems to be even more vibrant than at the time of Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768), who is credited with initiating the modern scholarly search for the historical Jesus. According to Tom Wright, by the late twentieth century we had arrived at a so-called Third Quest for the historical Jesus.'

The aim in this chapter is not so much to rehearse all the arguments for or against the historical Jesus. Rather, I will concentrate on any "net gains" in knowledge about Jesus since the time of Reimarus. We aim to undertake this assessment by looking at the claimed successes in different parts of the spectrum of biblical scholars, both conservative and liberal. We will show that while we have accumulated much information about first-century Palestine, there is a terminus in the amount of knowledge that we can extract about Jesus in the first century.

As is the case of the study of archaeology and history in the Hebrew Bible, the main issues with regard to the New Testament center on epistemology. In the case of evangelical apologetics, we demonstrate the failure of the supposedly more philosophically sophisticated historical methods used to combat naturalism in explaining biblical events. We illustrate these failures by the single most important test case of the "new" antinaturalist philosophy: the resurrection of Jesus.

In the case of the liberal Jesus, we shall concentrate on the project known as the Jesus Seminar and its members in order to show that while the supernatural has been eliminated from the reconstruction of the historical Jesus, the portrayals that have resulted are so inconclusive that we still cannot say with any confidence what Jesus said or did. We will also examine more closely some of the promises of Stanley Porter, who claims to have developed new criteria that will provide "a way forward in historicalJesus research."2

Our overall discussion demonstrates that both sides of the spectrum, liberal and conservative, are actually closer than we might suspect in their bibliolatry and religionism. Scholars on both sides usually construct portraits of Jesus that mirror themselves, in terms of theology, politics, and ethical values.' The fact that neither side has produced any verifiable knowledge about Jesus forms yet another argument to end biblical studies as we know it.

RESURRECTING THE RESURRECTION

A relatively new and highly educated crop of evangelical apologists is now claiming to have found philosophical breakthroughs that will bring about the demise of "naturalism," which is perceived to be the primary enemy of all sound philosophy. The start of such a trend is witnessed by, among other events, the founding of the Society of Christian Philosophers in 1978.4 And as in the case of previous generations of evangelicals, the test case is the supposed miraculous return to life of Jesus after his crucifixion and burial. The stories of the resurrection are in the Gospels of Matthew (28), Mark (16), Luke (24), and John (20).

While most academic scholars abandoned the historicity of the resurrection already by the late nineteenth century, there are still efforts to argue that attacks on the historicity of the resurrection are based on Enlightenment paradigms that supposedly now have been destroyed by more recent developments in epistemology. These attacks on naturalism are part of a new wave that is also attacking the naturalistic assumptions of the sciences in an effort to bolster religionist agendas such as Intelligent Design. That Christology and Intelligent Design are intimately linked is announced by William Dembski, one of the primary gurus of intelligent design: "So, too, Christology tells us that the conceptual soundness of a scientific theory cannot be maintained apart from Christ."5

Naturalism refers here to the idea that natural causes are the only valid explanations for all phenomena, including historical phenomena. In general, some scholars find it useful to distinguish between ontological naturalism and methodological naturalism.' The former argues that the natural world is all that exists. The corollary of that proposition, of course, is that supernatural phenomena and entities, such as God, do not exist. Methodological naturalism, on the other hand, makes no claim about whether the supernatural exists. Rather,

it argues that natural entities and causes are the only ones we can know or investigate. Accordingly, the success of any effort to establish the historicity of the resurrection is linked with the allegation that naturalism is inadequate to explain the resurrection accounts.

One champion of the antinaturalist approach to establishing the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is William Lane Craig. Craig has two doctorates, one in philosophy from the University of Birmingham (1977) and one in theology from the University of Munich (1984). He has authored or edited over thirty books and scores of articles.' He is particularly known for debating prominent skeptics and secular humanists, including the present author.' His official Web site lists him currently as a research professor in philosophy at Talbot School of Theology (1996-) and as a visiting professor of philosophy at Wheaton College, Illinois (2003-).

With regard to the resurrection, Craig argues that advances in the philosophy of history render an argument for the resurrection a reasonable one. Craig relies heavily on historical criteria developed by C. Behan McCullagh, a philosopher of history, to establish that the resurrection probably happened. Craig appraises McCullagh's work thusly, "In his book Justifying Historical Descriptions, historian C. B. McCullagh lists six tests used by historians to determine the best explanation for given historical facts. The hypothesis `God raised Jesus from the dead' passes all of these tests."9 Since these criteria are so central to Craig's argument, they bear repetition at length as represented by Craig: 1I

1. It has great explanatory scope. It explains why the tomb was found empty, why the disciples saw postmortem appearances of Jesus, and why the Christian faith came into being.

2. It has great explanatory power. It explains why the body of Jesus was gone, why people repeatedly saw Jesus alive despite his earlier public execution, and so forth.

3. It is plausible. Given the historical context of Jesus' own unparalleled life and claims, the resurrection serves as divine confirmation of those radical claims.

4. It is not ad hoc or contrived. It requires only one additional hypothesis-that

God exists. And even that need not be an additional hypothesis if you already believe in God's existence ...

5. It is in accord with accepted beliefs. The hypothesis "God raised Jesus from the dead" does not in any way conflict with the accepted belief that people don't rise naturally from the dead. The Christian accepts that belief wholeheartedly as he accepts the hypothesis that God raised Jesus from the dead.

6. It far outstrips any rival theories in meeting conditions 1 through 5. Down through history various rival explanations have been offered ... Such hypotheses have been almost universally rejected by contemporary scholarship. No naturalistic hypothesis has attracted a great number of scholars.

The first item to observe is that Craig modifies the number and general nature of the criteria outlined by McCullagh. As used by McCullagh, the criteria are mostly meant to differentiate between natural explanations, not between natural and supernatural explanations. And while Craig confidently proclaims that the resurrection hypothesis "passes all these tests," here is what McCullagh himself says:

> One example which illustrates the conditions most vividly is discussion of the Christian hypothesis that Jesus rose from the dead. This hypothesis is of greater explanatory scope and power than other hypotheses which try to account for the relevant evidence, but is less plausible and more ad hoc than they are. That is why it is difficult to decide on the evidence whether it should be accepted or rejected."

Further problems arise when we examine how McCullagh applies these criteria to one of his prime illustrations, the death of William II (Rufus), king of England from 1087 to 1100. According to most historians, William died mysteriously during a hunting expedition on August 2, 1100, an event recorded by William of Malmesbury and other medieval chroniclers.12 McCullagh undertakes an evaluation of three explanations for William's death that were discussed by an earlier historian, Christopher Brooke. The latter raised the possibility that William II was killed as part of a conspiracy that resulted in the crowning of his brother, Henry I, three days later.13 These three explanations

may be summarized as follows:

1. The king was killed accidentally.

2. The king was killed through witchcraft.

3. The king was killed as part of a conspiracy.

Most historians will opt for the first and third. But why do most historians, including McCullagh, not usually accept that the king was killed through witchcraft? McCullagh refers to his criterion of "plausibility" and tells us:

> As for the second hypothesis, a decision about whether the evidence which it explains also renders it probable to any extent, depends upon one's view of the occult. Do dreams and portents of events which subsequently occur make it likely that evil powers are at work, or not? If the answer is that they do, then the reports of those dreams and portents do confer plausibility upon the second hypothesis; but if the answer is negative, then the reports do not contribute to its plausibility.14

So, in actuality, the "plausibility" criterion is quite subjective. McCullagh provides no criteria for preferring one view of the occult over another, or over no view of the occult at all. Apparently, if one's view is that the occult exists, then it is allowed "plausibility." If someone else believes that the occult does not exist, then witchcraft is not "plausible" at all. If we apply this criterion evenhandedly, then we could render the claims of any religion plausible or implausible. For example, if our view is that Krishna does work in the world, then explanations appealing to Krishna's actions in the world can be used. No further evidence is needed to justify having that view.

McCullagh's sixth criterion is either misrepresented by Craig or adapted without much notice that it has been adapted. McCullagh's sixth criterion states:

> It must be disconfinned by fewer accepted beliefs than any other incompatible hypothesis about the same subject; that is, when conjoined with accepted truths it must imply fewer observation statements and other statements which are believed to be

Craig's representation of the sixth criterion ("It far outstrips any rival theories

in meeting conditions 1 through 5") apparently now refers to how much consensus a theory has gained. Craig elaborates this criterion with this statement:

> Down through history various rival explanations have been offered.... Such hypotheses have been almost universally rejected by contemporary scholarship. No naturalistic hypothesis has attracted a great number of scholars.16

Of course, such a criterion depends on which group of "scholars" one regards as authoritative. More importantly, elsewhere Craig rejects the use of "consensus" as a criterion, something reflected in his approval of historian Morton White's attack on "historical relativism":"

> White charges that the most dangerous thing about historical relativism is the way in which it can be used to justify historical distortions. The ultimate result of this totalitarian fiddling with the past is envisioned by George Orwell in 1984 ... "Whatever the Party holds to be true is truth."18

If Craig is inconsistent about the validity of consensus, then he is just as inconsistent about the use of "radical dissimilarity" as a criterion for historical explanation. In a debate with John Dominic Crossan, the celebrated historical Jesus scholar, Craig argues:

> In summary, there are good historical grounds for affirming that Jesus rose from the dead in confirmation of his radical personal claims. And Dr. Crossan's denial of this fact is based on idiosyncratic presuppositions which no other serious New Testament critic accepts.19

In the very same paragraph Craig is arguing that the resurrection of Jesus is a credible event because Jesus made "radical" and unique claims. On the other hand, Crossan is not credible because he makes claims no other New Testament critic accepts. Uniqueness, therefore, is applied on a pick-andchoose basis.

In any case, Craig misrepresents McCullagh's criteria, and McCullagh's application of his criteria actually yields inconclusive results even when applied to natural phenomena. In the case of William II, McCullagh admits that his

conclusion is ambiguous, and follows Brooke in admitting that "[t]he most we can say is this: If Rufus' death in August 1100 was an accident, Henry I was an exceptionally lucky man."20 McCullagh adds: "It looks as if arguments to the best explanation are not much more useful than simple hypothetical-deductive arguments after all."2' More importantly, McCullagh, unlike Craig, understands that these criteria are not useful for deciding between natural and supernatural explanations.22

MARIAN APPARITIONS AND THE RESURRECTION

Ironically, McCullagh's criteria, as used by Craig, are satisfied by many other events, whose historicity Craig rejects. One example is the Marian apparitions, which form the closest parallel to the Jesus apparition stories. The mother of Jesus, Mary, is dead. Yet she reportedly has appeared alive for at least a thousand years.21 One of the most recent and dramatic series of apparitions occurred at Medjugorje in old Yugoslavia.

The first reported apparitions at Medjugorje began on June 24, 1981, when some Croatian-speaking children claimed that the Virgin Mary had appeared to them on a hill.24 While many Protestants mistakenly believe that the visionaries do not claim to see something objectively present, these children emphatically affirm that they saw Mary as a fully physical and real person.25 The children were met with initial skepticism and harassment from some authorities. Surprisingly, one of the most vocal skeptics was Pavao Zanic, their own local bishop, who, according to one transcript of an interview, declared: "In my opinion Medjugorje is the greatest deceit and swindle in the history of the Church," a statement that would be equivalent to the skepticism expressed by Jewish priests in the case of Jesus.26

Despite the political conflicts caused by the apparitions within the local diocese, and despite the fact that the Catholic Church has not officially affirmed the authenticity of the visions, these supposed "witnesses" never recanted, and an extensive battery of medical tests concluded that the children were not suffering from any sort of psychiatric delusion.21 In short, already these "witnesses" have been subjected to more scientific and psychological probing than any "witness" we can identify for the resurrection stories of the New Testament. Moreover, the

number of pilgrims who have gone to Medjugorje by 1988 was placed by some at over fifteen million, which far surpasses the rate of growth of the Jesus apparition stories.28

In any case, we can easily illustrate that the Marian apparitions at Medjugorje satisfy McCullagh's criteria.

1. It has great explanatory scope. It explains why Mary's tomb has never been found, why people all over the world see postmortem appearances of Mary, and why faith in Marian apparitions came into being.

2. It has great explanatory power. It explains why Mary's body has never been found, why people repeatedly see Mary alive despite her earlier presumed death and burial (or disappearance).

3. It is plausible. Given the historical context of Mary's own unparalleled life and claims, the resurrection or continued existence of Mary serves as a direct confirmation of those radical claims.

4. It is not ad hoc or contrived. It requires only one additional hypothesis-that God exists. And even that need not be an additional hypothesis if you already believe in God's existence.

5. It is in accord with accepted beliefs. The hypothesis "God raised Mary from the dead or keeps her alive" does not in any way conflict with the accepted belief that people don't rise naturally from the dead. The Marianist Christian accepts that belief wholeheartedly as he or she accepts the hypothesis that God raised Mary from the dead (or kept her from ever dying).

6. It far outstrips any rival theories in meeting conditions 1 through 5. Down through history various rival explanations have been offered. Such hypotheses have been almost universally rejected by contemporary Marian scholarship. No naturalistic hypothesis has attracted a great number of Marian scholars.

Indeed, Craig's application of such criteria is arbitrary and could lead to declaring as "historical" the supernatural claims of many other nonChristian

religions.

We now briefly respond to some of Craig's more common arguments, which we summarize as follows:[29]

1. We cannot otherwise explain the empty tomb.

   As the Elvis phenomenon demonstrates, occupied tombs don't always prevent stories of empty tombs (or at least stories that the supposed occupant was never there at all). Moreover, the empty tomb story cannot be verified by any independent source outside of the Bible.

2. The disciples were willing to die for their testimony in the resurrection, which presumes that their testimony is true.

   We actually do not know whether the disciples were willing to die for anything. Besides, a willingness to die for beliefs does not make those beliefs true.

3. There was no preexisting resurrection tradition, and so the resurrection can be presumed to be linked to an authentically new event.

   False. Mark 6:16 portrays Herod as invoking a resurrection belief in order to explain supposed sightings of John the Baptist, who had been beheaded. Besides, all traditions (e.g., Marian apparitions, St. George's resurrection traditions) are, by definition, not preexisting traditions at their inception.[30]

4. Eyewitnesses listed in 1 Corinthians 15 guarantee that such appearances occurred.

   Empirical evidence shows that large groups of people can report seeing nonoccurring events. Marian apparitions have been reportedly witnessed simultaneously by millions of people, but most evangelical apologists do not see that as proof that Mary is alive[31] Besides, the claim of five hundred witnesses is found in a letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:6), who lived over seven hundred miles from the supposed events, and so could not easily verify the truth of the claim in the first place.

5. The time between the claimed event and the stories is too short for

legendary development.

Usually, such a claim is based on dubious statistics about how long it takes for legends to develop as well as very biased views of what constitutes a "legend." We know that highly developed stories can be promulgated and disseminated within hours or days of the supposed events (as was the case with Elvis stories).

6. The biblical sources have otherwise been proven reliable.

Not true, or it depends on how one interprets certain passages. Luke, who is often regarded as the author of Acts, has a particular habit of mislocating burial places. Acts 7:15-16 indicates that the tomb of Abraham is in Shechem, while Genesis 25:9-10 (see also Genesis 23:19-20) places Abraham's tomb near Hebron. Moreover, Acts 13:27-29 indicates that it was the residents of Jerusalem, not the disciples, who placed Jesus in a tomb, something that contradicts other Gospels, which insist that it was Jesus' own disciples who buried him (e.g., Matthew 28:57-61).

7. The social disregard for women's testimony renders it unlikely that biblical authors would have chosen women as witnesses, and so we can presume the women's testimony to be an authentic tradition.

The use of supposedly unreliable witnesses in stories of extraordinary events is one of the most persistent literary devices in the world. Thus, in Virgin of Guadalupe apparition traditions, an Indian peasant is the primary witness in events dated to 1531 in Mexico32 In the movie Independence Day (1996) one finds an alcoholic character being a prime initial witness to the arrival of extraterrestrial aliens.

8. Secular historians don't apply the same critical standards to nonChristian figures such as Augustus Caesar.

No secular historian argues for the historicity of any supernatural claim made for Augustus Caesar (who was also called "Son of god") or any other figure, Christian or not.33 Contemporary government documents and many inscriptions attest to the existence of Augustus Caesar in the first century, whereas not a single item for Jesus can be securely dated to the first

> century, including supposed references to Jesus by Roman historians such as Tacitus or Josephus.34

In fact, stories of resurrections or their variants are generated more frequently than most people might believe (e.g., St. George, the Virgin Mary, Elvis). Apologies for the resurrection are still largely based on naive views about how quickly traditions of extraordinary events can originate and develop substantive followings. The idea that Jesus would resurrect is no more extraordinary than the development of the idea that St. George resurrected, or that Elvis is still alive. These traditions fulfill varying psychological, social, and political needs. Otherwise, we cannot trace the story of Jesus' resurrection any earlier than New Testament manuscripts of the third century CE despite the great desire to believe that those manuscripts represent traditions of the first century.

SELECTIVE SUPERNATURALISM

Throughout the writings of Craig, we are told that naturalism is the enemy. However, it does not take long to see that Craig is a naturalist himself. In fact, the problem with all the antinaturalist Christian philosophers is that what they mean by "antinaturalism" is the use or allowance of supernatural explanations only for the events they favor. Consider Matthew 27:50-54:

> And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was tom in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

One would think that this account would be regarded as historical by Craig because he generally deems the Bible to be historically reliable. Yet he does not see this report as historical. In fact, he agrees with the assessment of another scholar, Robert J. Miller, a member of the liberal Jesus Seminar, who denies the historicity of this event.35 Craig states: "Dr. Miller's interpretation of this passage strikes me as quite persuasive, and probably only a few conservative

scholars would treat the story as historical."36

So why is this report of a resurrection not regarded as historical, but yet the one about Jesus, found just one chapter later, is regarded as historical? Craig tells us that it is because of the "apocalyptic" language of Matthew 27:52-53. Craig comments:

> For he [Dr. Miller] has argued that the passage should not be taken literally precisely because of the apocalyptic language coloring the story. But the empty-tomb narrative is remarkable just for its simplicity and lack of apocalyptic embellishment.37

Matthew 27:52-53 exposes Craig's inconsistent definition of a "fact." Aside from not defining clearly why that passage is "apocalyptic" in genre, Craig leaves unexplained why he does not regard claims reported in an apocalyptic genre as "facts." Nor does Craig explain why all of Matthew or Mark cannot be seen as apocalyptic, thereby also rendering the story of Christ's resurrection no more a "fact" than what is found in Matthew 27:52-53. A more likely reason that Craig does not regard that story as a "fact" is simply that scores of resurrected people walking all over Jerusalem should have left some notice in nonChristian records. Craig is dolorously aware that there are no such records .31

The new antinaturalism is not much more sophisticated or newer than what Reimarus faced in the eighteenth century. Any supposed defeats of positivist and naturalist epistemologies are an illusion. Yet Craig's epistemology has much in common with the antiminimalists such as Dever. Although Dever is by no means a supernaturalist, both he and Craig wish to use words expressing the highest degrees of certainty (e.g., Dever's "know," "datum"; Craig's "facts") for claims that cannot be verified directly. Both often accept this simplistic equation: "the claim that X is a fact" = "X is a fact," specific examples including the claim that there was an empty tomb and that Solomon built the gates at Gezer.

THE LIBERAL ACADEMIC JESUSES

The liberal academic Jesuses differ from the evangelical Jesus by the fact that no supernatural explanations are invoked. Yet the religionism has not disap peared completely. In cases where a more frankly secular view is espoused, it cannot really be deemed successful or to have advanced much beyond Reimarus. But

before we look at why current Jesus research has not advanced much beyond the eighteenth century, we must provide a brief sketch of Reimarus's life and work.

Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768), a Christian scholar from Hamburg, Germany, is often credited with producing the first modem critical inquiry into the "historical Jesus" in an anonymous work called the Wolfenbuttel Fragments, which appeared in 1774 through 1778.39 His positivism is very much in evidence when he justifies our right to be skeptical of the resurrection:

> Now, if all the apostles who, of course, had seen and heard Jesus' earlier miracles ... were still skeptical and doubtful about such an important event, how much less should we be reproached today for being doubtful and skeptical since we cannot experience all the things with our own senses but must accept it seventeen hundred years later from the reports of a few witnesses?4o

Reimarus is not afraid to say that narratives could be invented out of pure imagination, especially when it came to miracles. Thus, in assessing Luke's narratives of miracles, Reimarus remarks, "Thus it is with all these miracles. Nothing is easier than for the writer than to imagine them. It is no more trouble to him to put down three thousand than three hundred, his pen governs and orders all nature ..."41 Yet the ease with which anyone can write complex stories is often still doubted, as we have seen in the case of Dever and other scholars who have a very limited view of the human imagination.

In particular, Reimarus set out systematically to examine critically three types of Christian arguments for the resurrection: (1) The evidence of the Roman guard; (2) Christian testimony; (3) Old Testament prophecies. Following English deist thinkers (e.g., John Toland), Reimarus argued that nothing contrary to reason should be held as historically established, and he placed special emphasis on internal contradictions in evaluating historicity.42 He detailed a series of contradictions in the accounts that demonstrate how hopelessly confused the Gospels are.

Reimarus's overall conclusions, moreover, would spell not only the end of biblical studies but also of Christianity as he knew it. Note his remarks: "How then can anyone want the whole world and all mankind to base their religion, faith, and hope of salvation at all times and in all places upon the testimony of

four such varying witnesses?"43 If so, then we are doomed to failure in the search for the historical Jesus, and all later historical Jesus research mostly is an effort to refute Reimarus or to salvage whatever remains.

Of course, there were many other attempts to discern the historical Jesus after Reimarus, including the well-known ones by David Friedrich Strauss (The Life of Jesus, 1835) and Albert Schweitzer (From Reimarus to Wrede: A History of Research on the Life of Jesus, 1906).44 Schweitzer is widely credited with declaring the search for the historical Jesus virtually to have ended in his time. A few of his remarks bear repeating:

> There is nothing more negative than the result of the critical study of the Life of Jesus ... Whatever the ultimate solution may be, the historical Jesus of whom the criticism of the future, taking as its starting point the problems which have been recognized and admitted, will draw the portrait, can never render modern theology the service which it claimed from its own half-historical, half-modern, Jesus. He will be a Jesus, who was Messiah, and lived as such either on the ground of literary fiction of the earliest Evangelist, or on the ground of a purely eschatological Messianic conception. In either case, He will not be a Jesus Christ to whom the religion of the present can ascribe, according to its long-cherished custom, its own thoughts and ideas as it did with the Jesus of its own making.45

Despite his own advocacy for a Jesus that was concerned with the end of the world, Schweitzer saw clearly that historians were powerless to reach beyond the sources available.

Of course, there are scholars who are more openly secular humanist, and are willing to depart from the religionism that permeates historical Jesus studies. One example is Robert M. Price, a fellow of the Jesus Seminar, who provides a devastating critique of historical Jesus studies in his Deconstructing Jesus-and we share many of his conclusions.46 Earl Doherty's The Jesus Puzzle outlines a plausible theory for a completely mythical Jesus.47 Burton Mack and Gerd Ludemann also have done much to erode our confidence in the more religionist versions of historical Jesus research.48 Our purpose is not to slight them, but rather to show that the predominant schools of historical Jesus research in academia have still not superseded Reimarus, who had a perfectly reasonable

hypothesis centered on empirico-rationalism.

THE JESUS SEMINAR

So have we really improved on Reimarus? It is true that we have gained much new information about Judaism in the first century and Christianity in the first and subsequent centuries, especially in the aftermath of the discovery of the DSS and numerous "lost Gospels." But even John Dominic Crossan, one of the most recognized members of the Jesus Seminar, admits to the chaos that is historical Jesus scholarship today. Note his remarks, which also serve as a historical summary of historical Jesus research in the last four decades:

> There is a Jesus as a political revolutionary by S. G. F. Brandon (1967), as a magician by Morton Smith (1978), as a Galilean charismatic by Geza Vermes (1981, 1984), as a Galilean Rabbi by Bruce Chilton (1984), as Hillelite or proto-Pharisee by Harvey Falk (1985), as an Essene by Harvey Falk (1985), and as an eschatological prophet by E. P. Sanders (1985) ... But that stunning diversity is an academic embarrassment. It is impossible to avoid the suspicion that historical Jesus research is a very safe place to do theology and call it history, to do autobiography and call it biography.49

We might also mention Kathleen Corley's feminist portrait of Jesus, given how androcentric Jesus research has been.51

As we shall show, the Jesus Seminar, overall, is not different in that regard. As mentioned previously, Tom Wright declared in 1986 that there had begun a third quest for the historical Jesus. According to Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, two observers of historical Jesus studies, this third quest is marked by (1) sociological instead of theological interests; (2) the location of Jesus within Judaism; and (3) the use of noncanonical texts to reconstruct his life or the earliest traditions about his life.51

If one looks at Reimarus's work, we see that he certainly would satisfy the first two features. Reimarus is very interested in the sociology of the early Jesus movement. Reimarus repeatedly stresses the need to know about contemporary Judaism, as in his description of the method used to determine the meaning of Jesus' parables about the kingdom of heaven: "[H]ence, there is no other way for

us to find out what Jesus' intention was concerning the kingdom of heaven than to concern ourselves with the usual meaning of this phrase among the Jews of the time."52

As for the third quest's location of Jesus within Judaism, Reimarus already had him so located. In fact, Reimarus sees Jesus as very much a Torah-observant Jew. As Reimarus phrases it:

> I also wanted to make clear that Jesus neither sought nor commanded the abolition of the ceremonial law, nor did he himself introduce new ceremonies ... He variously bears witness to this in his life: he zealously attends service in the synagogues and the temple, he hears Moses and the prophets read on the Sabbath according to the ancient custom, he travels to Jerusalem for the great festivals, especially Passover but also for the feast of Tabernacles and Dedication as the law requires ... But he also insists in general that he has not come to abolish the law but to fulfill all righteousness [Matthew 5:17].53

Of course, Reimarus did not know of some of the Gospels that have been discovered in the twentieth century, but he still would satisfy the third quest's principle of looking at noncanonical texts to help reconstruct the life of Jesus. Reimarus cites the Jewish Targums in his discussion, as well as the Jalkut schimoni, which contained medieval Jewish interpretations, to examine the possible meanings of Messianic references by Jesus.54 Even if the sources he used were late or not appropriate, his principle of looking outside of the canonical texts was present.

The Jesus Seminar also bears all the features identified as part of the third quest, and so it is reasonable to see how successful their criteria and results have been. Briefly, the Jesus Seminar began in 1985 under the auspices of the Westar Institute. It was founded by Robert Funk, who served as president of the Society of Biblical Literature in 1975. Thirty scholars met in the initial year, but eventually some two hundred members, called "fellows," became part of the seminar. The epistemology follows in the positivist tradition, judging by this statement:

> The Fellows of the Seminar are critical scholars. To be a critical scholar means to make empirical, factual evidence-evidence open to

> confirmation by independent neutral observers-the controlling factor in historical judgment.55

The seminar members met to discuss the Gospels verse by verse (or saying by saying) and they developed a color-coded voting system, which one member described as follows:56

red:	That's Jesus!
pink:	Sure sounds like Jesus.
gray:	Well, maybe.
black:	There's been some mistake.

Since most seminar fellows are professors, it was decided to assign "gradepoint averages" to make the final decisions after a vote.57 The weighted averages produced by the vote were then converted into a percentage scale, with the highest number, indicating the most certainty among members, being 1.00.

red:	.7501 and up
pink:	.5001 to .7500
gray:	.2501 to .5000
black:	.0000 to .2500

For more specifics on the criteria of historicity used by the Jesus Seminar, we turn to one of their primary publications, The Five Gospels. Note this statement:

> In sorting out the sayings and parables attributed to Jesus, gospel scholars are guided by this fundamental axiom: Only sayings and parables that can be traced back to the oral period, 30-50 C.E., can possibly have originated with Jesus. Words that can be demonstrated to have been first formulated by the gospel writers are eliminated from contention. Scholars search for two different kinds of proof. They look for evidence that particular formulations are characteristic of individual evangelists or can only be understood in the social context of the emerging Christian movement. Or they search for evidence that sayings and parables antedate the written gospels.58

However, it does not take long to see that these criteria used by the Jesus

Seminar are fundamentally flawed.59 They simply have traded one sort of dogmatism for another.

Note, for example, that the above general criteria are supported by three "rules of attestation," the first of which is "[s]ayings or parables that are attested in two or more independent sources are older than the sources in which they are embedded."60 As with Dever, there is an appeal to "two" witnesses as some sort of minimum magic number. Moreover, the false assumption here parallels that of the search for an "original text" in that it assumes that by reconstructing some earlier source behind later ones, one has come closer to the "original" Jesus. In fact, in such a case one has simply uncovered an earlier tradition about Jesus, but that earlier tradition is not necessarily "less invented" (or "more authentic") than some later source.

Second, even attestation by two "independent" sources really proves nothing more than the existence of a "tradition," rather than the existence of the actual words or deeds of Jesus. That is to say, if Source X and Source Y agreed that Jesus said Z, then all you have proved is that two independent sources agree that there was a tradition that "Jesus said Z." This did not mean that Jesus actually said Z any more than two similarly "independent" sources prove that King Arthur did or said anything we have recorded.

All this is dependent, in turn, on the seminar's premise that there was "an oral period" that spanned from 30 CE to 50 CE, when the first texts about Jesus were supposedly written. Of course, this would mean that any written tradition reconstructed still has at least a twenty-year gap to fill with sources whose veracity cannot be verified by us, and probably not by any of the persons who were recording events at which they were not present.

If we look at a specific text, we start seeing the subjectivity of specific judgments. Consider Matthew 5:38-41 in the Jesus Seminar's translation:

> 38. As you know, we once were told, "An eye for an eye," and "A tooth for a tooth." 39. But I tell you: Don't react violently against the one who is evil: when someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other as well. 40. When someone wants to sue you for your shirt, let that person have your coat along with it. 41. Further, when anyone conscripts you for one mile, go an extra mile. 42. Give to the one who begs from you; and

> don't turn away the one who tries to borrow from you.6'

According to the editors, Jesus did not say what is in verse 38. However, he did say everything (except "But I tell you") in verses 39-41. In verse 42, only the first clause is certain according to the Jesus Seminar, and the second one ("and don't ...") is less so. And how were the degrees of certainty decided? The editors tell us that

> [t]he aphorisms in 5:38-41 are case parodies with a very narrow range of application. In contrast, the aphorisms in 5:42 are universal injunctions: give to everyone who begs and lend to all who want to borrow-everywhere, at all times. These sayings are short and pithy, they cut against the social grain, and they indulge in humor and paradox. The person who followed them literally would soon be destitute. It is inconceivable that the primitive Christian community would have made them up, and they appear not to have been part of the common lore of the time.62

All this is quite confusing. The instructions in 5:38-41 are described as having a "very narrow range of application" in contrast to the instructions in 5:42, which are universal injunctions. But if such a contrast were the reason for the higher degree of certainty given to the universal injunctions, we cannot tell from the actual color given to those portions. The same red color, indicating the highest certainty, is found in portions of 5:38-41 and in 5:42, and so what "narrowness" and "universality" have to do with any decision seems irrelevant.

Second, it is not clear that the injunctions in 5:38-41 are not universal. Why doesn't the injunction about turning the cheek in verse 39 apply "everywhere, at all times" just as much as the one about giving to the one who begs in verse 42? And why is the last clause of verse 42 given a lesser degree of certainty even though it seems just as universal as the first clause in that same verse?

Moreover, the entire exercise is premised on having a very clear psychological and personality profile of Jesus. But how do we know what Jesus might have been thinking in the first place except through the texts that the Jesus Seminar has predetermined to derive from Jesus? After all, one reason given is that it is "inconceivable" that the primitive church would have made these sayings up. But we have no information on what the early Church members, who

might have penned these words, could conceive or not. So what data is being used to judge the "conceivability" of any idea for these church members?

Let's look also briefly at Mark 2:1-12, which relates the famous case of a paralytic who had to be lowered through a roof of the house where Jesus was staying because the crowds outside the house were so large. According to the Jesus Seminar translation, Jesus' first words to the paralytic were (v. 5), "Child, your sins are forgiven."63 Jewish scholars present were said to have been astounded by such a pronouncement, as they believed only God had the power to forgive sins. But Jesus responded in verse 10 that he had said this "so that you may realize that [on earth] the son of Adam has authority to forgive sins."64

The Jesus Seminar judges that Jesus did not use a term such as "Son of Adam" or say anything about forgiving sins. Actually, they have a contradictory conclusion. On the one hand, Jesus' claim seems bold enough that "it is just possible that Mark 2:10 preserves early tradition."65 On the other hand, the editors ultimately decided that

> [t]he early church was in the process of claiming for itself the right to forgive sins and so would have been inclined to claim that its authorization came directly from Jesus as the messianic figure, "the son of Adam." In that case, v. 10 would be the product of the Christian storyteller, who is reading the convictions of the later community back into an incident in Jesus' life.66

There are problems with the reasoning leading to both conclusions. First, the idea of a healer forgiving sins is not as bold as the seminar suggests. In fact, in the DSS we find a text called "The Prayer of Nabonidus," which is named for a Babylonian king of the sixth century BCE. In that text an exorcist heals Nabonidus, and the latter may be interpreted to say that "an exorcist forgave my sin. He was a J[ew] ..."

Second, the reasoning used to reject the authenticity of the saying is also based on numerous and circular suppositions. For instance, what sources are used to evaluate what the church was "in the process of claiming" between 30 and 50 CE? More importantly, why can't we use this same rationale to evict from the Gospels almost any saying of Jesus? That is to say, anything Jesus said could have been the product of a Christian storyteller who wanted to bolster particular

creeds that his faith community was "in the process of claiming."

It would be futile to multiply examples because they are all based on similar principles. The Jesus Seminar has predetermined what Jesus or the early church thought, and then they have simply selected those verses that accord with what the Jesus Seminar thinks that Jesus thought.68 So despite no supernaturalism in their assumptions, the members of the Jesus Seminar are no different from fundamentalists who pick and choose proof texts to bolster their image of Jesus. All they have done is create a Jesus in their own image, as Robert Price, and Albert Schweitzer before him, acutely argued.

STANLEY PORTER’S NEW CRITERIA

It is not uncommon for scholars to think that they have made advances over the previous generations. Scholarship probably would not survive without that hope. One of the most historically informed scholars today is Stanley E. Porter, and so his claim to have developed some new criteria should be taken seriously. His work is interesting because it comes in the aftermath of the publication of the main results of the Jesus Seminar, and so one hopes Porter has learned some lessons from that enterprise.

In 2000 Porter published The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical Jesus Research: Previous Discussions and New Proposals. After an extensive review of the previous criteria used to determined the "authenticity" of Jesus traditions, he proposed three new ones, which he summarizes as: (1) "the criteria of Greek language and its context"; (2) "the criterion of Greek textual variance"; (3) "the criterion of discourse features."69 The third criterion manages only to tell us that the features of the apocalyptic discourse in Mark 13:5-37 "point clearly toward an earlier origin of the discourse than the Gospel itself."70 Therefore, we concentrate on the first two criteria, where Porter believes he has some certainty of specific words spoken by Jesus.

Porter's criteria were developed in the context of some previous criteria that relied on the supposition that Jesus spoke only, or mainly, in Galilean Aramaic, the form of Aramaic that existed in his presumed homeland of Galilee in what is now northern Israel. Such a supposition, as Porter notes, can be traced as far back as the seventeenth century, but it is mainly associated with scholars such as Gustav Dalman, Matthew Black, and, most recently, Maurice Casey." A

dramatic reflection of this idea is, of course, found in Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ (2004), which featured Jesus speaking in Aramaic throughout.

Since the Gospels were written in Greek, any clue for translation from Aramaic could be used as an indicator that we had a tradition emanating from Jesus himself. Some, such as Casey, even expend much effort reconstructing ("retroverting") the Aramaic behind the Greek. Porter does not deny that Jesus probably spoke in Galilean Aramaic, but he believes that scholars have devalued the amount of Greek that Jesus spoke. As he phrases it, "He spoke Aramaic to be sure, and Greek to be almost as sure, and possibly even Hebrew."72 By looking again more seriously at some of the situations in which Jesus probably spoke in Greek, argues Porter, we may recover some of his authentic words in Greek.

However, the promise of these new criteria is immediately diluted once we realize what Porter means by "authenticity." As he phrases it:

> The third caveat is with regard to what is meant by authenticity.... It will suffice to say that I use the term as it has been used in previous historicalJesus research ... as indicating an earlier tradition that has definable hallmarks that indicate that it might well have originated with Jesus, or at least it comes as close to this as we can reasonably find using the means at our disposal. In other words, the criteria indicate episodes where the probability is that the material could have originated with Jesus.73

Imagine if we still expended such efforts on finding the words of King Arthur in fifth-century Britain. We could, for example, establish that at the time of King Arthur there was Latin in use (as Romans had conquered Britain), and so if we found some episode that would render plausible the use of Latin by Arthur, then we could conclude that the probability is that the material could have originated with King Arthur.

And all of Porter's efforts in applying his first two criteria yield a miserly seven passages (and their parallels) where Jesus' words in Greek might be declared authentic. We adapt here his summary of these passages:74

1. Matthew 8:5-13 = John 4:46-54: Jesus' conversation with the centurion or commander (but the Johannine account diverges in terms of wording)

2. John 4:4-26: Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan Woman

3. Mark 2:13-14 = Matthew 9:9 = Luke 5:27-28: Jesus' calling of Levi/Matthew

4. Mark 7:25-30 = Matthew 15:21-28: Jesus' conversation with the Syrophoenician woman

5. Mark 12:13-17 = Matthew 22:16-22 = Luke 20:20-26: Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees and Herodians over the Roman coin of Caesar

6. Mark 8:27-30 = Matthew 16:13-20 = Luke 9:18-21: Jesus' conversations with his disciples at Caesarea Philippi

7. Mark 15:2-5 = Matthew 27:11-14 = Luke 23:2-4 = John 18:29-38: Jesus' trial before Pilate

If we look closely at a couple of these passages, we see that Porter has not learned any lessons from the failures of the Jesus Seminar or other previous criteria. For example, in John 4:4-26, Jesus probably spoke in Greek to the Samaritan woman because

> a conversation with a Samaritan woman who was at the least sceptical about a Jew speaking with her at all ... could easily have treated mundane issues such as the drawing of water, in Greek (even if mundane issues were given symbolic value by either Jesus or the Gospel author, and understood that way by the Gospel's readers).75

So it appears that discussing a "mundane" subject is a main criterion here for thinking that Jesus spoke in Greek to a Samaritan woman. Of course, Jesus could also have spoken in a Samaritan dialect to discuss mundane issues, but that does not seem to occur to Porter.

A similar rationale applies to Jesus' conversation in Mark 7:25-30 (= Matthew 15:21-28) with the woman from Syrophoenicia (an area outside of Israel corresponding roughly to modern Lebanon). Here, Porter concludes that "it is plausible that Jesus' discussion with the Syrophoenician woman in Tyre (or Sidon) would be in Greek."76 Again, there are many other possibilities that are also "plausible." For example, it is "plausible" that an author simply portrayed

Jesus as speaking to a Syro-Canaanite woman to make some other point (e.g., about ethnic relations).

When we delve deeper into the fruit of all of this speculation, we go from the uncertain to the inanely trivial. Consider that in Matthew 15:26 there is a phrase translated as "it is better." In Greek this phrase can be expressed by two words that can be in alternate order: E6tity (estin kalon) or xak6v £6tity (kalon estin), where kalon = "better" and estin = "is." So, basically, Porter engages in a discussion of whether Jesus probably used "is better" or "better is."

Porter concludes that "one is on firm ground in noting that Jesus probably used" estin kalon ("is better") within a larger sentence." Why? Because there are more manuscripts that have estin kalon in both Matthew and Mark. But all that proves again is that we have more copies of one textual tradition with that word order versus that of the textual tradition that has the reverse order. And that tells us nothing more about whether Jesus spoke the phrase than similar traditions about the order of King Arthur's words in a manuscript tradition tell us whether King Arthur said any particular set of words ascribed to him.

To be fair to Porter, let us consider the strongest case he has, which, by his own words, involves Jesus' answer to Pilate's question "Are you the king of the Jews?" Basically, Jesus' response consists of two Greek words, 6v Xeyets (su legeis = "you say"), which are found in all four gospels: Matthew 27:11, Mark 15:2, Luke 23:3, and John 18:37. Of these, John has a longer version (literally, "You say that King I am").

Porter concludes that "we probably have the authentic words of Pilate."" He reasons that Pilate uses a "non-Jewish phrasing" and so sounds like what a Gentile like Pilate would say. This despite the fact that Porter himself notes that Josephus, a Jew, also could use the phrase "king of the Jews."" But Porter soon glosses over that problem and tells us that the phrase "you say" is invariably attested in all four Gospels.

He further notes that the Greek phrase translated "you say" is found only in this episode in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Porter admits that John does have "you say" in a number of places (8:33, 8:52, and 9:17), but he dismisses them because they are in the context of questions, not statements. Presumably, this precludes the objection that John might just be applying some formulaic phrase

in the Pilate episode.

The vacuity of such exercises can be demonstrated by observing that a work attributed to the same Greek author sometimes had very different words even when presenting the same quotation. Consider again the story of Caesar's assassination, where the first attacker is a man named Casca. Plutarch wrote two works (Caesar and Brutus), which describe Caesar's first words to Casca as the latter attacks:

Caesar 66.5: Accursed Casca, what doest thou?[80]
Μιαρώτατε Κάσκα, τί ποιεῖς;
Brutus 17.3: Impious Casca, what doest thou?[81]
Ανόσιε Κάσκα, τί ποιεῖς;

Assuming neither textual corruption nor the work of later editor, each of which is always possible, Plutarch's Caesar and Brutus show that the same author could vary his own quotes. Trying to find which words Caesar actually spoke is beyond our ability, as Plutarch himself could have invented and varied these words for his own purposes.

So did we get very far by applying the criteria of Greek language use and Greek textual variants? The answer is no. All Porter has proven is that there was a textual tradition that portrayed Jesus as saying "you say." The historicity of this is no more proven than almost anything else attributed to him (or to Caesar) because authors could make up such quotes just as easily.

Nor can we really psychoanalyze the Gospel writers and conclude that they kept this short phrase because they thought it was more authentic than anything else Jesus said. The Gospel writers would have no way to verify what Jesus said to Pilate, especially if we believe John, who suggests that the whole conversation may have been a private one between Jesus and Pilate (see John 18:33, 38). Even if it was not a private conversation, Porter never explains how the chain of transmission would have worked (court records? Pilate or someone standing nearby told someone what Jesus said?).

As in the case of the claims by fundamentalists, we can also use the phenomena at Medjugorje to test some of Porter's speculations about how textual traditions arise. In the case of Medjugorje, the messages of Mary to the children

were recorded much more rapidly than in the case of Jesus, which had at least a twenty-year oral transmission period according to most scholars. Let us take a look at what should be a very fixed tradition at Medjugorje, the parting words of the Virgin Mary on June 26, 1981, the third day of the apparitions. These parting words are recorded in the accounts of three modern Medjugorje "Gospels"-by Mark I. Miravalle (1986), Rene Laurentin and Rene Lejeune (1988), and Michael O'Carroll (1989):

Miravalle:	"Go in God's peace."[82]
O'Carroll:	"Goodbye, my angels."[83]
Laurentin and Lejeune:	"Yes, to the same place as yesterday"? [84]

I place a question mark at the last entry because the parting words are not at all as in the first two sources, and it is uncertain that Laurentin and Lejeune represent a complete transcript.

Miravalle also records that on June 25, 1981, the second day of the apparitions, the Virgin Mary gave a message to Ivanka Ivankovic as follows, "Obey your grandmother and be good to her, for she is old and cannot work."85 Laurentin and Lejeune, however, record something similar on June 26, 1981, "Obey your grandmother and help her because she is old."86 Laurentin and Lejeune record no such message on June 25, and so we must posit that they believe they are recording the same message but on different days.

So at Medjugorje there are established variant textual traditions within five years of the apparitions. As in the case of my classroom exercise in textual criticism, the variety of quotes and sayings of the virgin, transmitted by the "witnesses" is already quite varied from the start. Thus, any invariant tradition (such as Jesus' "you say" to Pilate) may actually reflect a tradition standardized by writing rather than the preservation of some authentic oral tradition.

Note also that Laurentin and Lejeune have a shorter saying even though their book is later than the book of Miravalle, which has the longer saying. Usually, John's expanded answer of Jesus to Pilate is thought to be secondary because it is later than the other Gospels. Two "Medjugorje Gospels," however, both agree on the text "Obey your grandmother." Thus, if we use Porter's rationale for Jesus' answer to Pilate, then "we probably have here the authentic words of Mary."

Yet few biblical scholars today are advocates for the apparitions of Mary at Medjugorje and, as such, few seek to determine which of those words Mary actually spoke. Some of these biblical scholars may indeed argue that the case of Pilate's meeting with Jesus purports to be a natural occurrence, whereas the phenomena at Medjugorje do not. However, as we have noted, the encounters of the Medjugorje children with Mary affirm to be just as historical and physical as anything claimed for Jesus in the Gospels. And the point remains that the Medjugorje phenomena, natural or not, definitely prove that complex textual traditions can arise from nonoccurring events (or at least events we cannot verify to have occurred, if that means the actual appearance of Mary) in a very short time.

The Medjugorje traditions also show how difficult it is, even with all the modem tools of science and the existence of still living "witnesses," to determine what Mary is supposed to have said on any occasion. Given that simple fact, it should be apparent that searching for the actual words and deeds of Jesus, where the gap between his supposed existence and the first actual preserved texts is upward of one hundred fifty to two hundred years, is doomed to failure every time. Without video recordings of Jesus, we have only a terminus in what we can learn about his words and deeds.

WHY WE CANNOT MAKE PROGRESS

Rene Magritte (1898-1967), the famous Belgian surrealist painter, had an acute insight into the nature of reality and its representation. One of his famed paintings, titled "The Treachery of Images" (1928-29), consisted of a pipe with the caption: "This is not a pipe" ("Ceci n'est une pipe").87 Some may be puzzled at this caption, for the painting clearly shows a pipe, and so how can Magritte say it is not a pipe? To anyone familiar with the history of philosophy, Magritte was simply stating what is otherwise obvious; you are not looking at a pipe but at "a picture of a pipe."88

Yet Magritte's warning not to confuse reality with its representation is at the heart of most of the failures of biblical studies. We can see this confusion between reality and its representation in historical Jesus studies, textual criticism, and in biblical archaeology. And the fact that eminent scholars often do not understand this problem is evident in how William Dever attempts to refute the minimalist claim that the Bible does not bear a depiction of any real

David or Solomon, but rather depicts a propagandistic myth:

> Propaganda characteristically and deliberately distorts; but it does not freely invent. Even a caricature is an accurate, recognizable portrait in some respects, or otherwise it would have no impact.89

Baudrillard could not have chosen a better example of a person who has succumbed to an old trap. Not only is Dever flatly wrong in asserting that propaganda "does not freely invent," but the problem with the whole caricature analogy is that in modern caricatures we have access to both the referent (the object being depicted by the caricature) and the caricature itself. We can compare the caricature to the referent to determine where the real object is being distorted and where it is not.

But a comparison between the referent and the representation is just precisely the type of comparison we rarely can make using evidence from the ancient world. For example, we don't have access to "the real David," except through textual representations. The same goes for "the original text," "the real Israel," of the Iron Age, and the "historical Jesus." Without direct access to the "original" Jesus, as Reimarus seemed to have realized, all portraits are doomed to interminable speculation.

Medjugorje traditions again are an ideal living laboratory, which can demonstrate how "freely invented" complex traditions can be. There are now thousands of speeches, messages, events, and deeds claimed for a person who most scholars do not acknowledge as existing. The Mary at Medjugorje has impact not because it affirms or distorts the picture of a "real" person. Indeed, there is not much of a real Mary to describe even in the Gospel accounts. The Medjugorje traditions have an impact because they affirm or distort portrayals and representations of referents, like the Virgin Mary, who may never have existed as depicted at all.

OTHER GOSPELS CHANGE EVERYTHING

Charles W. Hedrick, who discovered a "lost Gospel," placed the number of Gospels at thirty-four in 2002.90 According to him, we have four canonical Gospels, four complete noncanonical Gospels, seven fragmentary Gospels, four Gospels known only from early quotations, two hypothetical Gospels (Q and the

Signs Gospels), and thirteen known only by a name mentioned in some ancient source. By 2006, one of those thirteen had surfaced and is known as the Gospel of Judas.

The Gospel of Judas was announced with great fanfare by the National Geographic Society. As with all such announcements, I tend to be skeptical, especially since the document precipitated out of the black market. However, the National Geographic Society subjected it to numerous scientific tests, including radiocarbon dating by the renowned accelerated mass spectrometry laboratory at the University of Arizona. The tests calculated that "the mean calendar age for the collection was between CE 220 and 340."91 Other tests performed on the inks satisfied the National Geographic Society of the authenticity of all the material components.92

Besides the excitement of such a new discovery, the Gospel of Judas seems to paint a different picture of Judas. In the canonical Gospels, he is a traitor and a symbol of evil. The Gospel of Judas suggests that eventually Judas will be the most exalted of the disciples. Jesus discusses how the other disciples are jealous of Judas, and Jesus even says this to Judas: "[Y]ou will come to rule over them."" So was Judas really the bad guy, or have the canonical gospels portrayed him as evil out of jealousy or for some other malicious purpose? Can we verify the claims about Judas in the canonical Gospels any more than we can verify the claims in the Gospel of Judas? Of course, such noncanonical Gospels make it even more difficult to ever think we know much about Jesus at all.

In any case, and without rehearsing the contents and debates about each of the noncanonical Gospels counted by Hedrick, we can make the following brief comments about their implications for the end of biblical studies. First, these "lost" Gospels confirm that early Christianity was so diverse and chaotic that we can no longer speak of "Christianity" but now must talk of "Christianities," a point made by, among others, Bart Ehrman's Lost Christianities (2003).94 What these "Christianities" have in common is their claimed connection with a "Christ," who is portrayed in astoundingly variegated fashion.

Second, we can no longer privilege just the canonical Gospels as the earliest or best sources for depicting early Christianity. This, of course, is a fundamental principle of the Jesus Seminar, and John Dominic Crossan's study of the Historical Jesus already places the Gospel of Thomas and the Egerton Gospel in

the earliest stratum of his sources (alongside 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 Corinthians, and Romans).95 The fact remains that the earliest dated manuscript of any Gospel is a tiny fragment known as P52, which contains only a few verses from John 18. That fragment cannot tell us if the unpreserved part of that manuscript bears a Gospel of John much like ours. The other three Gospels do not have manuscripts dated before the third century, and the complete ones come from the fourth.

However, such dates for canonical materials overlap with at least some of the dates for noncanonical Gospels. The Greek fragments of the Gospel of Thomas have been dated to the second century, and the Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of Mary have been dated to the third century.96 Thus, we cannot say that these Gospels have less "authentic" or "historical" material than the canonical Gospels, if they have any authentic or historical material at all. And if we dismiss noncanonical Gospels as forgeries because they were probably not written by the claimed authors, then the same could be said for many books in the canon, ranging from Moses's "books" to 2 Peter." The point remains that we cannot verify or falsify many claims in these noncanonical Gospels any more than we can verify or falsify claims in the canonical ones.

If we identify biblical studies with the study of only the canonical materials, then it is clear that "biblical studies" actually ended decades ago. After all, we have been studying many of the noncanonical works in the DSS for decades. But as the shift to noncanonical Gospels accelerates, so, too, will the final death of biblical studies. There may be studies of "Christian texts" or "Jewish-Christian texts" perhaps, but New Testament Studies will be at best a reverential, convenient, or nostalgic rubric.

SUMMARY

The quest for the historical Jesus is an abject failure. After hundreds of years, and probably millions of person-hours, reconstructions of Jesus are no better than the one of Reimarus in the eighteenth century. Reimarus had nearly exhausted the critical search for any historicity, and he found mostly a myth. Even if we do not accept all of Reimarus's conclusions, we can say that he had a plausible scenario based on verifiable phenomena that we can see exist today (people can steal bodies; people can lie; invention requires only an imagination and a pen, etc.).98

Further progress is futile because we simply don't have any preserved accounts of Jesus from his time or from any proven eyewitnesses. And even if we were to discover lots of new material mentioning Jesus in his supposed lifetime, such material still would not render us surer of anything. After all, we possess an abundance of contemporary material about Mary at Medjugorje but most Protestant apologists easily dismiss it. Contemporaneity means very little after all if we cannot verify the information in any contemporary reports.

We can dismiss the conservative scholars as motivated by religious agendas, but what propels the more liberal academic scholars to invest in such futile searches for the historical Jesus? The answer is that both the conservative and liberal historical Jesus scholars still share religionist and bibliolatrous bonds. They believe that Jesus' words matter or should matter.

But who is the audience for historical Jesus studies? The audience consists mostly of believers who think that Jesus' words and deeds are preserved in the Bible, or that at least some of them are recoverable. Intellectual honesty should compel at least the liberal scholars to announce aggressively to the world that Jesus cannot be found, and that any notion of following actual words or deeds of Jesus is vacuous.99

Scholars should be helping end human dependence on the words and deeds of a man who cannot be shown to be any more special, wise, or ethical than many other people we can name. The fact that most academic scholars are not vigorously pursuing such an educational program only functions to keep their sacred text relevant and themselves employed.

NOTES

1. Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 379. The term "Third Quest" has been criticized effectively by Stanley Porter, The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussions and New Proposals (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 28-59, but especially pp. 51-59.

2. Porter, The Criteria for Authenticity, p. 242.

3. Many scholars have made the point that the portrait of the historical Jesus mirrors the values and theology of modern authors. For an anthology of such discussions, see William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins, eds., Whose Historical Jesus? Studies in Christianity and Judaism Series 7 (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997).

4. For one representative manifesto of this new generation, see J. P. Moreland, Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987).

5. William A. Dembski, Intelligent Design: The Bridge between Science and Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), p. 209.

6. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, Naturalism: A Critical Analysis (London: Routledge, 2000).

7. The most relevant of these works include William Lane Craig, Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2002); Craig, Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics (Wheaton: IL: Crossway, 1994). For another work from the same circle of apologists, see Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland, eds., Jesus under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

8. For example, Paul Copan and Ronald K. Tacelli, eds., Jesus'Resurrection: Fact orFigment?A Debate between William Lane Craig and Gerd Ludemann (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000); Paul Copan, ed., Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? A Debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998). My debate with Craig took place on February 5, 2004, at Iowa State University.

9. Copan and Tacelli, Jesus' Resurrection, pp. 36-37.

10. Ibid., p. 37.

11. C. Behan McCullagh, Justifying Historical Descriptions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 21.

12. William of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum, especially 1:575 (the

corresponding passage in the internal divisions of the Gesta Regum Anglorum is iv.333).

13. Christopher N. L. Brooke, The Saxon and Norman Kings (New York: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 178-96. Brooke, in turn, was reacting against the theory of Margaret A. Murray, who promoted the idea that William II belonged to a pagan cult that sacrificed him. See Margaret Murray, The God of the Witches (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), especially pp. 162-71. McCullagh, following Brooke, slightly misrepresents Murray when he says (p. 21) that in the case of William II, Murray "attributed his death to witchcraft." Rather, Murray believed that while there were omens reported about William's death, his actual manner of death involved a literal sacrifice rather than death through some wholly supernatural means implied by "witchcraft."

14. McCullagh, Justifying Historical Descriptions, pp. 23-24.

15. Ibid., p. 19. Italics are McCullagh's.

16. Copan and Tacelli, Jesus' Resurrection, p. 37.

17. Morton White, Foundations of Historical Knowledge (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

18. Craig, Reasonable Faith, p. 186.

19. Copan, Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? p. 31.

20. McCullagh, Justifying Historical Descriptions, p. 22; Brooke, The Saxon and Norman Kings, p. 196.

21. McCullagh, Justifying Historical Descriptions, p. 26.

22. Craig also overlooks McCullagh's comments (Justifying Historical Descriptions, p. 28) about the incommensurability of natural and supernatural explanations.

23. See William A. Christian, Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981); M. Warner, Alone ofAll Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary (New

York: Knopf, 1976); E. Ann Matter, "The Virgin Mary: A Goddess?" in The Book of the Goddess Past and Present: An Introduction to Her Religion, ed. Carl Olson (New York: Crossroad, 1990), pp. 80-96; and Kevin McClure, The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary (Wellingsborough, Northamptonshire, UK: Aquarian, 1983).

24. See Hector Avalos, "Mary at Medjugorje: A Critical Inquiry," Free Inquiry 14, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 48-54. According to M. J. Wallace (Medjugorje: Its Background and Messages [Huntington Beach, CA: Follow Me Communications, 1991], pp. 31-34), the six youngsters (and their birthdates) are: Jakov Colo (March 6, 1971), Ivan Dragicevic (May 25, 1965), Mirjana Dragicevic (March 18, 1965), Ivanka Ivankovic (April 21, 1966), Vicka Ivankovic (September 3, 1964), and Marija Pavlovic, (April 1, 1965). Ivanka is acknowledged to be the first one who saw the apparitions, as she was accompanied only by Mirjana; shortly thereafter the four remaining children joined the first two youngsters in sharing the experiences.

25. The physical nature of the encounters was emphasized numerous times by the claimed witnesses. Thus, when an interviewer (see Rene Laurentin and Ljudevit Rupcic, Is the Virgin Mary Appearing at Medjugorje? An Urgent Message for the World Given in a Marxist Country, trans. Francis Martin [Gaithersburg, MD: The Word Among Us Press, 1984], p. 46) asked "how" they saw the virgin, one of the children responded, "Like you right now as I talk to you. I can touch her."

26. Quotation from Michael O'Carroll, Medjugorje: Facts, Documents, Theology (Dublin: Veritas, 1989), p. 238. For a compilation of Zanies complaints and views, see pp. 73-140, 237-50.

27. Rene Laurentin and Henri Joyeux, Scientific and Medical Studies on the Apparitions at Medjugorje (Dublin: Veritas, 1987), pp. 49-50. According to Joyeux, the team included an ophthalmologist (Jacques Philippot), a cardiologist (Bernard Hoarau), a neurophysiologist (Jean Cadhilhac, of the Yugoslav Society of Neurophysiology), and an electrical engineer (Rene Dubois-Chabert).

28. One can never be certain of these numbers. Time (December 30, 1991, p. 64) places the amount at "more than 10 million pilgrims." Wallace (Medjugorje, p. 1) places the number of pilgrims at "over 15 million."

29. The numbers are my own, and represent summarized statements based on Craig's "Four Facts" and their associated claims found in Copan and Tacelli, Jesus' Resurrection, pp. 32-34.

30. On the resurrection traditions of St. George, see Samantha Riches, St. George: Hero, Martyr and Myth (Thrupp, UK: Sutton, 2000), pp. 82-95.

31. For example, consider the report of Ray Stanford (Fatima Prophecy [New York: Ballantine, 19871) about the Marian apparitions at Zeitoun, a suburb of Cairo, between 1968 and 1971. He says (p. 45): "The persons present at apparitional events there varied from several thousands to over two hundred thousand per night. Total witnesses numbered perhaps into the millions. People of many countries and of varied religious backgrounds ... Moslems, Copts, Roman Catholics, Protestants and others were enthralled, even overcome by tears of joy at what they saw."

32. For a thorough study of Virgin of Guadalupe traditions, see Stafford Poole, Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531-1797 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995).

33. For a detailed study of the divinity of the emperors, see Manfred Clauss, Kaiser and Gott: Herrscherkult im romischen Reich (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1999). Epigraphic and other evidence clearly shows that Julius Caesar was also addressed as "God" (6eos) while still alive, on which see A. E. Raubitschek, "Epigraphical Notes on Julius Caesar," Journal of Roman Studies 44 (1954): 65-75, and especially inscription (I) on p. 66.

34. One of the dirty little secrets of historical Jesus scholarship is that the GrecoRoman sources used as "independent confirmation" for Jesus all depend on manuscripts of medieval date, and so one cannot be sure what has been added. John P. Meier (A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, vol. 1, The Roots of the Problem and the Person [New York: Doubleday, 1991], p. 100, n. 6) admits: "As with Josephus, so with Tacitus our observations must be tempered by the fact that the earliest manuscript of the Annals comes from the 11th century."

35. Robert J. Miller, "Responses: What Do Stories of the Resurrection Prove?" in Copan, Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? pp. 77-98.

36. Ibid., p. 165.

37. Ibid.

38. For another very equivocal answer to whether this passage in Matthew is "historical," see Nicholas T. Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), pp. 632-36.

39. My narrative about Reimarus depends on Charles H. Talbert, ed., Reimarus: Fragments, trans. Ralph S. Fraser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970).

40. Ibid., p. 173.

41. Ibid., p. 267.

42. For Toland, there are two excellent editions: John Toland, Christianity Not Mysterious or a Treatise Showing That There Is Nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, Nor Above It and That No Christian Doctrine Can Be Properly Called a Mystery (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2003); Philip McGuiness, Alan Harrison, and Richard Kearney, eds., John Toland's Christianity Not Mysterious: Text, Associated Works, and Critical Essays (Dublin: Lilliput, 1997).

43. Talbert, Reimarus: Fragments, p. 176.

44. Albert Schweitzer, Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1906).

45. Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 398-99.

46. Robert M. Price, Deconstructing Jesus (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000).

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52. Talbert, Reimarus: Fragments, p. 124.

53. Ibid., pp. 98-99.

54. Ibid., p. 124.

55. Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 34.

56. Ibid., p. 37.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., pp. 25-26.

59. For a general defense of the Jesus Seminar, see Robert J. Miller, The Jesus Seminar and Its Critics (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1999).

60. Funk, Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, The Five Gospels, p. 26.

61. Ibid., p. 143.

62. Ibid., p. 145.

63. Ibid., p. 43.

64. Ibid., p. 44.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. We follow the translation of the Prayer of Nabonidus in Florentino Garcia Martinez, The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson (Leiden: Brill, 1994), p. 289. The quoted portion of the Aramaic text reads: H171 '10 75 pDw >HVT11, following F. M. Cross ("Fragments of a Prayer of Nabonidus," IEJ 34 [1984]: 260-64) who translates: "as for my sin, he forgave it (or: my sin he forgave). A diviner-who was a Jew ..." In this translation the one doing the forgiving is God, but the problem is that the words preceding the quoted portion are not certain. Thus, the alternative translation is also plausible. Note that Garcia Martinez's translation has brackets on the last two letters of "Jew," which means that he regards those letters as not present in the manuscript, but Cross's facsimile and transliteration ("Fragments of a Prayer of Nabonidus," pp. 261, 263) shows that all the letters of the word are visible.

68. For a more conservative academic critique of modern historical Jesus research and the Jesus Seminar, see Philip Jenkins, Hidden Gospels: How the Search for Jesus Lost Its Way (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Jenkins (p. 157) observes that of the seventy-six scholars listed as active members of the seminar in 1993, about one-third were associated with Harvard Divinity School and the Claremont Graduate School.

69. Porter, The Criteria forAuthenticity, p. 126. For convenience, we have

added numbers to Porter's quoted descriptions of the criteria.

70. Ibid., p. 235.

71. Gustav Dalman, Die Worte Jesu mit Beruchtsichtigung des Nachkanonischen Jiidischen Schriftums and der Aramaischen Sprache, Band 1: Einleitung and wichtige Begriffe (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965); Matthew Black, An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967); Maurice Casey, Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

72. Porter, The Criteria for Authenticity, p. 131.

73. Ibid., pp. 143-44.

74. Ibid., p. 158. Our adaptation consists mainly of spelling out in full the names for the biblical books that Porter abbreviates.

75. Ibid., p. 155.

76. Ibid.

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79. Ibid., p. 204, n. 52. On Pilate, in general, see Jean-Pierre Lemonon, Pilate et le gouvernement de la Judie: Textes et monuments (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1981), especially pp. 178-80, where the scene between Jesus and Pilate is discussed.

80. Plutarch's Lives, 7:598.

81. Ibid., 6:162.

82. Mark I. Miravalle, The Message of Medjugorje: The Marian Message to the Modern World (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), p. 3.

83. O'Carroll, Medjugorje: Facts, Documents, Theology, p. 29.

84. Rene Laurentin and Rene Lejeune, Messages and Teachings of Mary at Medjugorje: Chronology of the Messages, The Urgency of Return to God (Milford, OH: Riehle Foundation, 1988), p. 150.

85. Miravalle, The Message of Medjugorje, p. 3.

86. Laurentin and Lejeune, Messages and Teachings of Mary, p. 150.

87. In French, "Le trahison des images." See also Michel Foucault, This Is Not a Pipe, trans. James Harkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). For a collection of Magritte's works, see Marcel Paquet, Rene Magritte, 1898-1967.Thoughts Rendered Visible (New York: Taschen, 2000).

88. The entire discussion of representation, of course, can be traced at least back to Plato. For a more recent famous discussion, see Jean Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation, trans. Sheira Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

89. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know? (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 47.

90. Charles W. Hedrick, "The 34 Gospels" BR (June 2002): 20-31, 46-47.

91. See the "Publisher's Note," in Rudolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, The Gospel of Judas (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2006), p. 184.

92. We should note, however, that McCrone Associates, the company that tested the inks in the Gospel of Judas, also vouched for authenticity of inks in "The Widow's Plea," which has since been declared a forgery. On these tests by McCrone, see Chris A. Rollston, "Are They Genuine?" NEA 61, no. 1 (March 1998): 8-9; Rollston, "Non-Provenanced Epigraphs I: Pillaged Antiquities, Northwest Semitic Forgeries, and Protocols for Laboratory Tests," Maarav 10 (2003), especially pp. 146, n. 29 and 182-93.

93. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, The Gospel of Judas, p. 33.

94. Bart Ehrman, Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

95. Crossan, The Historical Jesus, pp. 427-29.

96. For the dates, see list in Hedrick, "The 34 Gospels," pp. 27-28.

97. See Ehrman, Lost Christianities, pp. 9-11.

98. For approaches that see the Gospels as having fictional elements parallel to classical literature, see the essays in Jo-Ann Brant, Charles W. Hedrick, and Chris Shea, eds., Ancient Fiction: The Matrix of Early Christian and Jewish Narrative, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 32 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).

99. On the diminishing willingness of liberal intellectuals to voice their opinions, see Eric Lott, The Disappearing Liberal Intellectual (New York: Basic Books, 2007).

Chapter 5

Literary Criticism: Aesthetics as Apologetics

it relates to biblical studies, literary criticism is the discipline devoted to elucidating the literary artistry of biblical authors. As with the nomenclature of other disciplines, one must be careful to note that "literary criticism' 'has not always meant the same thing. Since the rise of modern critical scholarship, "literary criticism" has been applied to the discipline devoted to the recovery or reconstruction of the literary history of the biblical texts. For that reason, it is often viewed as synonymous with source criticism.' In the case of the Hebrew Bible its greatest achievement was establishing the idea that the Pentateuch, which most traditional Christians believed had been written by Moses, in fact had a composite and long history.'

For our purposes, we use literary criticism to describe a suite of approaches unified by the idea that biblical texts are constructed artfully and have artistic merit. As David J. A. Clines and J. Cheryl Exum, two of its most influential current practitioners, observe in their own survey of literary criticism, "its primary concern is the text as an object, a product, not as a window upon historical actuality."3 Such a description reflects what is called "New Criticism" in broader secular literary studies. The New Criticism focuses on a work of art as an autonomous object whose beauty is not dependent on its historical context. A Rembrandt painting retains its beauty no matter what historical forces brought it about.'

At first sight, one may welcome this approach insofar as it focuses on the artistic components of the Bible as opposed to its truth claims. One need not accept any of the Bible's religious claims to accept its literary beauty. The Bible seemingly is treated as any other work. But the fact is that literary aesthetics are still being used as the handmaiden of apologetics. Any artistic merit in the Bible is often glorified as unique or superior to that of other works of literature. Therefore, the supposed beauty of the Bible is used to maintain its value and to keep the profession of biblical studies alive.

One need not excavate deeply to find the motives for literary analysis of the

Bible among virtuosos such as Robert Alter, Meir Sternberg, and Frank Kermode.[5] In fact, the apologetic intent is sometimes quite frank, as in the case of Robert Alter's comment on how ancient and modern readers have approached the Hebrew Bible:

> Subsequent religious tradition has by and large encouraged us to take the Bible seriously rather than enjoy it, but the paradoxical truth of the matter may well be that by learning to enjoy the biblical stories more fully as stories, we shall also come to see more clearly what they mean to tell us about God, man and the perilously momentous realm of history.[6]

One of the main products of these new biblical aestheticians is The Literary Guide to the Bible, which was published by the venerable Harvard University Press.' The editors tell us that "the general reader can now be offered a new view of the Bible as a work of great literary force and authority, a work of which it is entirely credible that it should have shaped the mind and lives of intelligent men and women for two millennia and more."[8]

Alter and Kermode argue that the Bible has literary merit even apart from religious considerations. Moreover, their effort is prompted by the realization that "an increasing neglect of the Bible in our secularized times has opened a gulf between it and our general literature, a gap of ignorance which must in some measure falsify the latter."[9] In addition, Alter also notes how fruitful literary analysis has been in the case of Dante, Shakespeare, and Tolstoy. He laments that "[t]he general absence of such critical discourse on the Hebrew Bible is all the more perplexing when one recalls that the masterworks of Greek and Latin antiquity have in recent decades enjoyed an abundance of astute literary analysis."[10]

Judging by the complaints from many conservative Christian writers, modern literary study of the Bible is rife with postmodernist agendas that dilute the "truth" value and historicity of the Bible. But some writers for conservative journals also see the apologetic value of literary criticism. Joe Sprinkle, writing in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, observes, "We may disagree over whether Moses ever existed in history, but we can certainly agree that he exists as a character in the story."[11] Among the benefits Sprinkle detects is a new ability to "defend the unity of the Bible."[12]

Accordingly, here we show that: (1) literary beauty is subjective and one could just as well argue that biblical texts are actually ugly; (2) the Bible fails to satisfy the standards of beauty set by scholars themselves; (3) other texts could also satisfy or surpass the Bible when the same criteria of beauty are applied; (4) ethics can be invoked to judge some biblical texts as aesthetically defective. In sum, the current emphasis on literary analysis and aesthetics becomes simply another apologetic device to maintain the value of the Bible in modern society.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF AESTHETICS

The field of aesthetics, the discipline devoted to the conceptualization of beauty, has a long history.13 In his famous Poetics, Aristotle (ca. 384-322 BCE), the celebrated Greek thinker, discussed a wide range of artistic endeavors, which he subsumed under the term poetics, but which today range from poetry to plays. For him, poetics is about mimesis, or the human imitation of reality through aural and visual means. Aristotle located the origin of poetics as follows:

> From childhood men have an instinct for representation and in this respect man differs from the other animals that he is far more imitative and learns his first lessons by representing things. And then there is the enjoyment people always get from representation.14

Thus, the idea that art is meant for producing joy is here affirmed in definitive form.

But Aristotle also tells us that "beauty consists in magnitude and ordered arrangement."15 The right magnitude means that something beautiful cannot be too big or too small, but just the right size to be taken in by the eye. At the same time, and paradoxically, the best poetry should not be wholly imitative of reality, insofar as a good poet "employs unfamiliar words ... a rare word, a metaphor, a lengthening, and anything beyond ordinary use."'6

The idea of beauty as consisting of order and symmetry continued into the Christian Middle Ages, as is evidenced by the definition of the prominent medieval theologian St. Thomas Aquinas. In an attempt to justify the beauty of the Trinity, Aquinas remarked that beauty has three requirements, two of which are: "integrity or perfection, since those things that are impaired are by the very fact ugly; due proportion or harmony."" What is proportional, ordered, and

unified is beautiful. We may recall here Sprinkle's argument that literary criticism is meant to recover the "unity" of the Bible that had been atomized by biblical critics.

During the Renaissance, there were intense discussions about what constituted beauty. One of the most articulate theoreticians was Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), who wrote a treatise called On the Art of Building (De re aedificatoria) in 1452. For Alberti, art was not to be classed among the crafts, as it had been in the Middle Ages. The visual arts, in particular, focused on the sublime and the beautiful, and so should not be confused with crafts such as weaving or stonecutting. Rather, art was an intellectual activity that had as its object the "true" representation of nature, as opposed to the mere duplication of visual formulae and models (exempla) common in medieval painting. Alberti wrote that "we define beauty as that reasoned harmony of all the parts of a whole, so that nothing may be added, diminished, or altered but for the worst."'8

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), known as one of the greatest artists of all time, was also interested in the theory of art. However, Leonardo saw a problem with Alberti's theory of art-Alberti wanted a "true" representation of nature, but yet did not want to represent the ugly parts of nature. For Leonardo, one must represent both if one is going to be accurate in representing nature.19 As we shall see, Leonardo's critique of Alberti is still most relevant in the case of biblical aestheticians, who tend to fixate on the positive side of biblical literature.

Accordingly, one sees more of an emphasis by Leonardo on how things are really seen as opposed to how they are seen in ideal form. In many Renaissance paintings, for example, many figures and objects are equally clear regardless of the relative distance between them in the painting. A figure in the background will be just as sharp as one in the foreground. Leonardo's concept of sfumato, wherein things that are farther appear to be more hazy, especially at the borders of an object, corresponds to this idea of painting how we "truly" see.20

If we fast-forward to the present, we find that aesthetics still struggles with the some of the problems found in Aristotle, Aquinas, Alberti, and Leonardo da Vinci. What has changed, however, is increased attention to how art functions as an expression of power and oppression. Such studies have ranged from those that show how British landscape painters attempted to hide the rural poor to

studies of how art history itself has been permeated by the "great man" focus.21 Moreover, the notion that beauty is a cultural con struct is routinely accepted, even if defenders of more traditional views are still quite vigorous.

IS ISAIAH 40 A MASTERPIECE?

In order to understand how meaningless or subjective literary beauty can be, let us look briefly at Isaiah 40, which Sakae Kubo and Walter Specht, two scholars of translation, describe as "[o]ne of the literary masterpieces of the OT," or Old Testament.22 In a discussion on the merits and problems of the translation known as The Living Bible, Kubo and Specht complain that this version's paraphrased style often dilutes the literary artifice of the original. By looking at the specific features about which they complain, we can infer what they think makes Isaiah 40 "a masterpiece." In particular, Kubo and Specht object that The Living Bible has distorted verse 26, which in the RSV reads:

> Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.

The Living Bible, however, reads:

> Look up into the heavens! Who created all these stars? As a shepherd leads his sheep, calling each by its pet name, and counts them to see that none are lost or strayed, so God does with the stars and planets.

The author of Isaiah 40:26 apparently sees the stars as equivalent to an army led by Yahweh. The point of the original author seems to be that Yahweh is such a great general that he knows each soldier (star) by name because he himself created it. Naming is part of the act of creation. The Living Bible apparently has decided to substitute shepherd imagery instead of military imagery. Admittedly, "shepherd" is not in the Hebrew text, and it is even disingenuous of The Living Bible to insert "shepherd" in a context that is a military one.

But aside from the purely linguistic objections to the translation, Kubo and Specht object to The Living Bible because it eliminates the military imagery, which is "far more majestic" than what is reflected in the shepherd imagery of The Living Bible.23 But why would Kubo and Specht say that the military

imagery is "more majestic" than shepherd imagery? Even if military imagery is more majestic, how does this military imagery yield a masterpiece any more than the military imagery in any other ancient work?

In fact, there is little in form that differentiates this text from almost any other text in the book of Isaiah or anywhere else in the Near East. Consider this extract from the Great Hymn to Osiris, an Egyptian composition dated to the Eighteenth Dynasty (ca. 1550-1295 BCE):

> Plants sprout by his wish
> Earth grows food for him.
> Sky and stars obey him.
> The great portals open for him
> Lord of acclaim in the southern sky
> Sanctified in the northern sky.[24]

If Isaiah 40 can be declared a masterpiece on the basis of its descriptions of the relationship of a god to the stars, then would the Egyptian hymn also qualify? Indeed, we can find many more such "masterpieces" in nonbiblical literature. Why, then, should we privilege biblical "masterpieces"? We can reasonably conclude that the term "masterpiece" is a completely subjective judgment. Nonetheless, there are scholars who believe that there are very specific features that qualify as "beautiful," and so we turn to those.

SYMMETRY AND BEAUTY

As our brief historical survey shows, symmetry has been one of the great criteria of beauty from at least the time of Aristotle. And already in ancient times, the appreciation of the literary artistry of the Bible often rested on how well it matched Greek criteria of beauty. Thus, Philo, the famous Jewish writer credited Moses with Greek hexameter. Likewise, Josephus believed that Moses composed Exodus 15 in hexameter.25 Indeed, prior to even the twentieth century, literary artistry in the Bible was largely confined to the "poetic" portions of the Bible, with the book of Psalms being a premier example.

By the time of the Enlightenment, a growing feeling that the Bible was not being appreciated as much as non-Christian works of poetry brought a renewed emphasis on biblical aesthetics. This is most clear in De Sacra Poesi

Hebraeorum (On the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews), which consisted of lectures delivered in 1753 that were subsequently revised for publication. The author is Robert Lowth (1710-1787), an Anglican bishop. He outlines one of the motives for his work as follows: "It would not be easy, indeed, to assign a reason, why the writings of Homer, of Pindar, and of Horace should engross our attention and monopolize our praise, while those of Moses, of David, and Isaiah, pass totally unregarded."26 Robert Alter, if we recall the complaint he proffered in The Literary Guide to the Bible, only repeated Lowth's justification over two centuries later.

Lowth argued that biblical poetry should be privileged because "the human mind can conceive of nothing more elevated, more beautiful, or more elegant."27 As in the cases of previous Jewish and Christian writers who wanted to assert the supremacy of biblical literary artistry, Lowth referred to Aristotle's Poetics to assure readers that Hebrew poetry met the Greek philosopher's criteria for good poetry. In particular, Lowth stated that Hebrew poets use such "anomalous language ... as to form a distinct poetical dialect."28

However, there was a problem. It was difficult to compare biblical poetry with the paradigmatic Greek poetry that consisted of accentual meter. One could not find accentual meter so easily in Hebrew poetry, even as Lowth insisted that Hebrew poetry did have meter. But if meter could not be found so easily, Lowth believed the Bible had a feature, called "parallelism," which proved worthy of the best literature. Today, most scholars do credit Lowth with the idea that "parallelism" was a key to understanding Hebrew poetry.

For Lowth parallelism consisted of three types, the first of which was synonymous parallelism, in which one line repeats the sense of the following line. One example is in Psalm 1:5:

[A] Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

[B] nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

A second type was antithetical parallelism, in which one line provides an opposite sense of a following line. Thus, in Proverbs 27:6, we find:

[A] Faithful are the wounds of a friend;

[B] profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

A third category, synthetic parallelism, described more complex arrangements that did not fit the first two.

Aristotle argued that poetry elicited joy from the listener, and Lowth argued that he aimed to study how Hebrew poetry is "calculated to excite corresponding emotions in the soul."29 More importantly, Lowth wanted to expand the notion of Hebrew poetry so that it included the prophets, not just the Psalms, Job, and other books commonly held to be poetic.

Lowth's idea of parallelism remained standard even until the twentieth century, when new discoveries prompted a reexamination of the nature of Hebrew poetry. The most important of these discoveries came in 1929, the date of the discovery of texts in a language that became known as Ugaritic. The language, which was recognized to be related to Hebrew, is named for Ugarit, the ancient city corresponding to Ras Shamra, in modern Syria. Stories and ideas that were very similar to those in the Bible helped to rewrite the history of the religion of Israel.

As it pertains to poetry, however, two American scholars, David Noel Freedman and Frank Moore Cross, both students of the renowned William F. Albright, began to reemphasize the concept of syllable counts, which had been proposed in the late nineteenth century.30 Instead of parallelism based solely on sense, these scholars emphasized the importance of patterns in syllable counts.31 That is to say, successive lines or sets of lines of Hebrew poetry had a regularity that corresponded to the number of syllables in each line. A line with eight syllables, for instance, could be paired with another line of eight syllables to form a symmetrical couplet, also known as a bicolon.

But bicolons were never perfectly symmetrical in terms of the number of syllables. Some bicolons might have nine syllables in the first line and seven syllables in the second line. So Cross and Freedman ingeniously posited that the symmetry actually consisted of the succession of long and short lines, which were denominated with the Latin terms longum and breve, and abbreviated as "I" and "b" respectively. Thus, we could have a succession of lines such as these in Jonah 2:3-4: b/l, 1/b, 1/b, b/l. That is to say, this passage exhibited a higher order of symmetry in which two long-short lines were enclosed within a pair of short-

long lines. While the feature identified by Cross and Freedman as the bearer of symmetry was different from the one proposed by Lowth, the idea of symmetry still remained as the defining mark of poetry and beauty.

Another important development in the study of Hebrew poetry is usually credited to James Kugel, a professor at Harvard, and a colleague of Frank Moore Cross. Kugel protested that the whole idea of meter was a myth, and that Lowth was responsible for promoting an idea of parallelism that kept the true nature of Hebrew poetry hidden. Instead of viewing parallelism as the key, Kugel proposed that the essence of Hebrew poetry was "seconding," the device by which a line completes or emphasizes a previous line. As he succinctly phrases it: "A is so, and what's more, B is so."32 Therefore, the verse we highlighted above, from Psalms 1:5, as read by Kugel might be as follows:

[A] Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

[B] and what's more, sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

Of course, all of this left open what was "beautiful" about seconding, or how that differed from the same structures we see in other Near Eastern "poetry."

IS DISSYMMETRY UGLY?

If symmetry is the mark of beauty, then it is reasonable to conclude that dissymmetry should be regarded as ugly, or at least as not beautiful. But upon closer inspection, we see that biblical aestheticians do not apply their own criteria of beauty very consistently. Such dissymmetry ranges from poetic couplets to entire books. One of the largest books in the Hebrew Bible, the book of Jeremiah, displays such dissymmetry when one compares the location of corresponding passages in the Hebrew and Greek versions:

Greek	Hebrew
26:2–28	46:2–28
27	50
28	51
29:1–7	47:1–7

Relative to the Greek version, the Hebrew Bible skips from a portion of chapter 46 to chapters 50 to 51, and then back to 47. One or the other version is dissymmetrical or an outright mess. Moreover, it is not simply a case where one can blame the Greek version for destroying any symmetry present in an original Hebrew version. We now know, from Hebrew copies of Jeremiah among the DSS, that many times the Septuagint faithfully followed a Hebrew tradition.

If we return to syllable counts to achieve our symmetry, then readers should note that often such symmetry is achieved only by emending the text to achieve the syllable counts that are deemed to be there. One can do this by eliminating words that are "prose particles," such as the definite article ("the").33 One enormous project counted the amount of prose particles and determined that anything with less than 5 percent was poetry, and that with more than 15 percent the text was prose .14

It may be true that some of these particles can be shown to be later developments in the history of the Hebrew language, relative to its Semitic antecedents. But historical development still does not answer the question of why a word such as "the" should be seen as "prose." It is a circular argument as recognized by one of the advocates of this idea, David Noel Freedman, who said: "I want first of all to apologize for the use of the term `prose' particles since this seems to prejudge the case."35

Frank Moore Cross, one of the most prominent biblical scholars alive, has been criticized repeatedly for emendations intended to "restore" symmetry. One illustrative case is Jonah 2:2-3 (verses 3-4 in the Hebrew text), where Cross describes the poetic structures as "[t]he four bicola form a quatrain of interlocking structure: b:l::l:b-l:b::b:1."36 That is to say, the verse contains a pattern of lines whose syllable lengths are as follows (number of syllables in parenthesis) :37

Line 1:	short (7)	I called out of my distress
Line 2:	long (7)	To Yahweh and he answered me
Line 3:	long (7)	Out of the belly of Sheol I cried;
Line 4:	short (5)	You heard my voice

Line 5:	long (9)	You cast me into the depth of the Sea;
Line 6:	short (7)	River encircled me.
Line 7:	short (5)	All your breakers
Line 8:	long (9)	and all your waves engulfed me.

Such a structure forms what is called "chiasmus," in which the second half is an inverted version of the first half, when considering the length of each line. We could also express it as: short-long, long-short/long-short, short-long.

But to achieve this structure, Cross removes the Hebrew phrase (blbb) translated "into the heart of and transforms the plural "seas" into a singular "sea." The difference can be seen by comparing Cross's translation of line 5 with the RSV version of verse 3: "For thou didst cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas ..." Removing these unwanted words allows Cross to argue that there are nine syllables in line 5 and seven syllables in line 6. If he had included the Hebrew words translated in the RSV as "into the heart of the seas," that could have yielded this sequence of short and/or long lines:

short-long, long-short/long-short, short, short-long.

The chiasmus disappears and so does the symmetry, as the second half would no longer be an inverted version of the first half (halves are divided by a slash).

Cross's reasoning for removing "in the heart of' is most nebulous. He tells us that when it comes to the first bicolon, "[p]oetic license has been taken for structural reasons described below."" When we come to line 5, he explains only that "we are inclined to see a conflation of ancient variants, both stock phrases: mswlt ym and blbb ymym."39 For Cross, "conflation" ends up meaning that the Hebrew phrase he translates as "depth of' in line 5 is original, but later it was paired (conflated) with another Hebrew phrase, translated "into the heart of." He believes such a pairing ("into the depth of [the Sea]" and "into the heart of [the Seas]") distorted "the original" poem, which only had "into the depth of [the

Sea]."

As in the cases cited in our previous chapter on textual criticism, we have a modern scholar presuming that he has determined what "the original" should be, and then adjusting the text accordingly. But why does the unsymmetrical combination have to be later in date? Or why couldn't the original author design it originally without a chiasmus? Maybe the author did not care as much about chiasmus as Cross does?

Jack Sasson, author of a major commentary on Jonah, acutely sees that Cross's emendations "are almost completely motivated by metrical adjustments."40 That is to say, the text is changed for the sake of generating the symmetry desired by Cross. However, the dissymmetries also bother Sasson, and ultimately he has to conclude that `jaggedness, imbalance, asymmetry, and discord, in proper dosage, can be equally attractive .1141

Of course, the "proper dosage" is never clearly delineated. It also leaves unexplained why people do not generally perceive asymmetry as "attractive," as evidenced by the great efforts to manufacture symmetry in the text by modern scholars. Sasson seemingly cannot even conceive of the possibility that Jonah can be called an ugly text if symmetry is the criterion of beauty. Sasson, in fact, adds, "I can urge on the readers a more appreciative series of adjectives, `haunting,' `comforting,' `serene,' `purposeful,' or the like."42 But why not just say "distorted," "aggravating," "annoying," "ugly," or the like?

ARTISTRY AND CREATIVITY

If, as a celebrated treatise by Arthur Koestler argued, creativity is a mark of artistry and genius, then the Bible would not fare so well in many instances.43 Consider Psalms 68:21 (verse 22 in the Hebrew Bible), which consists of two parallel lines:

1. But God will shatter the heads of his enemies/

2. the brow of him who walks in his guilty ways.

Unfortunately, translations are inconsistent about translating the Hebrew word (7777; transliterated here as qdqd), which is rendered as "brow" in the quote

above. Thus, for consistency, we will translate it as "brow," though one will also find "pate" and "hairy crown" (RSV).

In any case, we begin by noting that the first line contains a verb (shatter) + object (heads). In the second line, the verb is not expressed but the object (brow) is expressed. Thus, "head" and "brow" form a word-pair insofar as they hold the same grammatical function (objects of the verb "shatter"). A second thing to note is that this word-pair ("head/brow") is found repeatedly in other biblical passages, including the following:

> Genesis 49:26:
> may they be on the head of Joseph/
> and on the brow of him who was separate from his
> brothers,

> Deuteronomy 33:16:
> Let these come upon the head of Joseph/
> and upon the brow of him that is prince among his
> brothers.

> Psalm 7:17 (v. 16 in the Hebrew Bible):
> His mischief returns upon his own head/
> and on his own brow his violence descends.

Thus, at least in this instance, we do not find great originality, if that is a measure of some supposed superiority in Hebrew poetry. Instead, we find a formulaic word-pair that different authors plugged into their lines over and over.

More importantly, the texts from Ugarit show that the word-pair technique is not a Hebrew invention, as the same word-pair and parallelistic technique can be found in an Ugaritic text:

> May Horon break your head/
> May Athartu, the name of Baal, your brow.[44]

A more recognizable word-pair in the Hebrew Bible may be found in the chant in honor of David's slaying of Goliath (1 Samuel 18:7):

> Saul has slain his thousands, and
> David his ten thousands.

Again, we can find this word-pair (thousands/ten thousands) in other parallel lines, such as in Deuteronomy 32:30:

> How should one chase a thousand, and
> two put ten thousand to flight,

Other instances occur in Micah 6:7 and in Psalm 91:7. And as was the case with the word-pair, "head/brow," we can find this word-pair in an Ugaritic work called the Legend of Kirta.

> They marched by thousands . . .
> And by ten-thousands . . .[45]

In fact, we now have found so many word-pairs shared between Ugaritic and Hebrew texts that a three-volume work was needed to catalog and explain them.46 If Hebrew parallelism and selection of words is beautiful, then the Ugaritic texts can be just as beautiful on this count. Even if we analyze the texts according to Kugel's standard of "seconding," the Ugaritic and Hebrew are still analogous, as Kugel's technique does not change the formal structure of the original.

If we judge superiority by creativity, then we can see that Hebrew poets are not so creative when it comes to the use of these prebiblical word-pairs. The growing recognition that many Hebrew poetic techniques are not original led Stanley Gevirtz, a scholar of Hebrew poetry, to offer this apologetic remark: "[T]he creativity of the Hebrew poet will not be found by the application of any modern requirement for 'originality.'""

A newer strategy is to justify the "genius" of Hebrew poetry by noting that other works, praised since antiquity, are not original either. Stanley Gevirtz, for example, appeals to the use of similar stock formulae in the Iliad and Odyssey in order to argue that the Hebrew Bible is no less ingenious. Gevirtz concludes, "Rather [it is] in the reworking of old themes by means of conventional phraseology, in traditional manner, to produce familiar actions uniquely and poetically significant that the poet's genius is to be sought."48 Again, we are only treated to meaningless or circular rationales.

ALPHABET SOUP

Poetry that seems to be structured on clear principles presents us with good examples to test how competent Hebrew poets were. The Hebrew Bible presents us with various examples of what are called acrostic poems. According to Watson's authoritative handbook of Hebrew poetry, "[I]n an acrostic poem, the first letter of each line follows a certain sequence. Usually this sequence is alphabetic, so that each line begins with a successive letter of the alphabet."49 The Hebrew alphabet has this traditional sequence: aleph, bet, gimel, dalet, he, waw, zayin, het, tet, yod, kaph, lamed, mem, nun, samekh, `ayin, pe, tzade, qoph, resh, shin, taw. There are twenty-two letters in all.

As the newly discovered inscriptions at Tel Zayit confirm, the traditional order was not always followed, and the alphabet underwent an evolution.50 Yet there are clearly cases where the poet did not include all the letters for reasons that may relate to simple incompetence or textual corruption. In Psalm 9, we have a sequence that has: aleph, bet, gimel, he. Thus, the poet has left out the dalet from the expected sequence. It is not that the dalet is in a different order in this author's alphabet, for dalet does not reappear in the beginning of any line in the rest of the poem at all.

Psalm 9 ends with a kaph. Since Psalm 10 begins with a lamed, a letter that normally would follow kaph, many scholars believe Psalms 9 and 10 are actually a unified composition. But Psalm 10 lacks the next properly positioned letters, which should be mem, nun, samek, `ayin, and pe. If we follow the text of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartentsia, we have to wait until verse 7 to find a pe, which is not even the first letter of the verse but rather the first letter of the second word in the verse. Moreover, Psalm 10 does not have a line beginning with tzade, which would be expected in a Hebrew alphabetic acrostic. In seeming despair, even Watson, who otherwise shows the patience of Job when analyzing Hebrew poetry, proclaimed, "Ps 10 is too obscure for further evaluation."51

So we are left with very few alternatives. One is that the authors of these psalms started out with an alphabetic structure in mind, but could not carry it out. Another possibility is that the psalms have been corrupted in transmission. In any case, even when we judge the psalms by their own supposed goal of an alphabetic composition, they fail to exercise competence.

Psalm 34 has another acrostic, but it is missing a waw. Apparently to complete twenty-two verses, the poem adds a line at the end that begins with

ape. There are other instances where the pe comes at the end of a psalm that has left out the waw. Victor Avigdor Hurowitz argues that there may be some rule or purpose of which we are not aware.52 At the same time, it may also be a case of incompetence or corruption.

There are poems that have been transmitted in such a mangled state that even the most sympathetic promoters of Hebrew poetry feel they must apologize. Carroll Stuhlmueller, who wrote a commentary on the psalms for the Harper's Bible Commentary, had to admit this about Psalm 35:

> The Hebrew text is not well-preserved, overloaded perhaps with glosses and corrections, so that translations differ in their reconstructions. If God can speak through an ungifted though religiously inspired person (cf. Ps. 31), likewise God's normative word can come through canonical texts damaged in transmission. 53

Harper's Bible Commentary is supposed to be an academically respectable commentary, yet we see that theological claims are part of the scholarship. Indeed, how can Stuhlmueller verify that God meant to speak through damaged texts? If a mangled poem is good enough to be canonical, why not add many more corrupted and damaged poems into the canon? Clearly, Stuhlmueller wants it both ways: Beauty affirms divinity, but ugliness does not disaffirm divinity.

NARRATIVE BEAUTY?

Already in the Poetics we encounter a discussion of how poetry might relate to history. For Aristotle, "a poet's object is not to tell what actually happened but what could and would happen either probably or inevitably."54 Despite many other developments in the history of aesthetics, Aristotle's conception of the relationship of literary beauty to history still remains influential in justifying the study of biblical artistry.55

With the rise of academic biblical studies, particularly in the nineteenth century, the historical sections of the Hebrew Bible became the subject of intense scrutiny. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the higher critical scholarship had mounted a withering attack on the historicity of the Pentateuch. Many began asking, for example, why we should bother to read Genesis if it is mostly fairy tales and legends. It is in the aftermath of this attack on the

historical aspects of the Bible that we find a renewed rationale for the aesthetic study of the Bible.

One response is found in the work of Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932), the father of "form criticism," which sought to identify the most basic and ear liest literary units of biblical texts. However, we can also see a thinly veiled motivation for privileging the poetic side of the Bible, as the following passage shows:

> But legends are not lies; on the contrary, they are a particular form of poetry. Why should not the lofty spirit of the Old Testament religion, which employed so many varieties of poetry, indulge in this form also? For religion everywhere, the Israelite religion included, has especially cherished poetry and poetic narrative, since poetic narrative is so much better qualified than prose to be the medium of religious thought. Genesis is a more intensely religious book than the Book of Kings.56

Thus, the value of the Bible need not be restricted to its historical character. Rather, it still has value as a medium of "religious thought." In this way, Genesis, which now had been exposed as full of myths, could be regarded as even more "religious" than the books of Kings, which are regarded as the most historical. In other words, Gunkel thought that he had found a way to maintain the religious value of those portions of Genesis, despite their lack of historical value.

One reason that modern literary critics are paying attention to prose narratives is that they are reacting to the atomistic work of the previous "higher critics." These higher critics had cut up the Bible into sources that sometimes interlaced with each other in the most discordant and inharmonious of ways. In the end, however, all the talk about "narrative artistry" proves to be as arbitrary as what we see with poetry. Furthermore, we can find just as much artistry in the works of many other ancient authors, and so focus on biblical artistry provides no better grounds for privileging that text over those of many other cultures.

LAW, EDUCATION, AND AESTHETICS

Another impulse in the study of biblical aesthetics came from legal and educational developments, particularly in America.51 Resistance to the teaching

of the Bible as an instrument of evangelization in public schools can be traced as far back asl902. Herbert W. Horwill, in an article in Atlantic Monthly, noted how the National Education Association blamed the decline in biblical education on the idea that the only way to teach the Bible was in a theologically prescriptive manner. The NEA then advocated the teaching of the Bible as literature rather than as a theological book.58

Supreme Court decisions prompted a new effort to shift biblical studies away from historical criticism, especially in high school curricula, to literary aesthetics, as another way to preserve the value of the text. The prime example is the decision known as Abington v. Schempp (1963) in which the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional a Pennsylvania law that required public schools to read at least ten verses from the Bible each school day. Despite the fact that children who did not want to participate could be excused, the Supreme Court judged that this constituted a violation of the establishment clause. Yet the Supreme Court also carried this important qualifier to its decision:

> It might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history or religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively, as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistent with the First Amendment.59

Thereafter, one sees a surge of efforts to maintain the study of the Bible in schools by shifting to "Bible as literature" classes.

James Ackerman, who spent most of his career at Indiana University, illustrates the active role that academic biblical scholars played in maintaining the value of the Bible in public schools in the aftermath of the Schempp decision. Together with Thayer S. Warshaw and other associates, Ackerman developed materials for teaching the Bible "in literature" and "as literature."60

Ackerman was trained in biblical studies at Harvard under Frank M. Cross, whose work we have discussed. Ackerman's rationale was simple: "For their intrinsic value, then, and for their importance as literary sources, these stories belong in the school English curriculum."61 In addition, Ackerman argued that

the Bible had "humanistic value" because it recorded the way of life of Israel, which was important "to understand more nearly some of the forces at work in our own.62

Ackerman recommended that the stories selected for the public school curriculum include "[t]he Two stories of the Creation (Gen. 1:1-2:4a; Gen. 2:4b-25)," the Exodus, and David and Goliath." The reference to the "two stories" of creation signaled that the public school curriculum would contain the critical position on these stories as opposed to the traditional Christian position. In addition, Ackerman argued that the approach he suggested repre sented "the general consensus of those Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish scholars who, though they may differ in the interpretation of details, attempt to understand the development of biblical religion and history within the context of its Near Eastern background."63

If we examine more specifically what Ackerman has in mind, we learn that it is to answer questions that focus specifically on stories and how they are constructed. Among the questions he advises teachers to pose to students in the story of Jacob and Esau are: "How did the Lord explain to Rebekah the unborn children struggling in her body? What did Isaac request from Esau? What did he propose to do for his eldest son in exchange for the savory meat?"64

As we shall show, such questions could become so detached from any moral lessons for the reader that these stories could begin to lose their relevance altogether. After all, we could just ask why anyone should care what Isaac requested from Esau. And while Ackerman insisted that this approach is not meant to affirm faith, he also granted that "such faith is not denied. 1161 Note also that even if we can question the relevance of the specifics of any biblical story, Ackerman also could counter with the idea that these stories have "intrinsic value." We shall return to this idea of "intrinsic value" in justifying biblical studies.

While legal issues were a significant factor in the rise of literary approaches to the Bible in lower levels of education, literary studies in higher education also had been undergoing some important changes throughout most of the twentieth century. Indeed, the study of "literature" was not dominant for even much of the nineteenth century in American universities. And often it was those trained in religious studies who taught the literature courses. For example, at the

University of North Carolina nine of the twelve professors appointed to teach literature between 1819 and 1885 were ministers.66 It was only in 1875, at the University of Michigan, that "American literature" became a separate academic subject.67

In any case, one significant shift in the study of literature, which was already underway in the late nineteenth century, was the move away from the philological study of literature. Philological study of literature emphasized understanding texts from the lowest linguistic and grammatical levels (e.g., etymology, grammar, syntax) in order to ascertain an author's meaning. The plea against such an approach was sounded in the 1887 Publications of the Modern Language Association, which still is the dominant academic organization of literary scholars in the world.68 The author Albert Smyth put it bluntly: "Literature can by no possibility render its highest service to the cause of education until it has been divorced from philology."69

The shift away from philology and the search for original context and intention led to what became known as the New Criticism, a term popularized by John Crowe Ransom. Martin Wright Sampson of the University of Indiana was among the first to announce the new approach as one centered on the study of literary works for their own sake. The biography of authors and their intentions were now seen as irrelevant. The original context was irrelevant. Each text could be seen as a unit on its own.

Gerald Graff contends that there were more than lofty motives at work in the development of New Criticism. As Graff himself admits, "I remember the relief I experienced when I realized that by concentrating on the text itself I could get a good discussion going about almost any literary work without having to know anything about its author, its circumstances of composition, or the history of its reception .1170 New Criticism, with its emphasis on the text as we have it, immediately saved a lot of time for professors who felt overburdened with many other commitments.

ETHICS AND AESTHETICS

In January 2002, a reporter for the Wall Street Journal named Daniel Pearl was kidnapped and murdered in Karachi, Pakistan. The manner of his killing was a gruesome decapitation. A videotape of this mutilation was disseminated on the

Internet. His body was found on the outskirts of Karachi on May 16, 2002. A group called the National Movement for the Restoration of Pakistani Sovereignty claimed responsibility. Later, Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and others were tried and convicted for Pearl's murder.71

Imagine now that someone wrote a poem extolling the beheaders and the beheading. Would such a poem be regarded as a work of art? If not, why? Is it that such a poem does not meet the formal requirements for a good poem? If the formal aspects of the poem preclude us from calling it beautiful, could we not fix that problem by using parallelism and some of the techniques we find in the Bible?

My impression is that no matter how skillful we are in our parallelisms or use of word-pairs, such a poem would rightly be seen by many Americans as morally objectionable. We could not celebrate a poem that glorifies the brutal beheading of another human being. We probably would call it an ugly poem just for its horrific content and unethical dimensions, rather than for its formal features (e.g., rhyme).

The role of ethics in evaluating artistic merit has been the subject of con siderable discussion.72 Briefly, two polar positions may be identified. The "autonomist" position, advocated by scholars such as Clive Bell and Daniel Jacobson, views aesthetic value as independent of the moral content of any artistic depiction, textual or audiovisual.73 By this standard, Michelangelo's The Last Judgment at the Sistine Chapel, which includes scenes of people being tortured, is beautiful regardless of the content.

On the other pole, the "ethicist" position, associated with scholars such as Berys Gaut, sees ethics as inextricably bound with artistic evaluations.74 As Gaut phrases it: "The ethicist principle is a pro tanto one: it holds that a work is aesthetically meritorious (or defective) insofar as it manifests ethically admirable (or reprehensible) attitudes."75 While some autonomists may object that ethical judgments cannot be imposed on fictional characters that do not exist, Gaut argues that what is being judged is a work's attitude toward the actions of those characters.

Ethicism would also judge how well an aesthetic intention matches the result. For example, if a given piece of art is designed to elicit a particular

emotion or moral lesson but does not, then we can judge that work as an aesthetic failure. Thus, if a comedy film is meant to incite laughter, it can be judged a failure if audiences do not laugh at all. What is "funny" may be a relative judgment, but such a film still represents a failure of the idea that what is funny to the producers will be funny to the audience.

There are other positions in between. For our purpose, I advocate one of those intermediate positions, which is called "moderate moralism," and which is advocated by Noel Carroll 76 Unlike a more radical ethicist position, moderate moralism recognizes that some artistic works (e.g., instrumental music) may not have any moral lessons or dimensions. On the other hand, artistic depictions can also be judged by the self-described intention to create an effect in a reader. When such a depiction fails to accomplish that, then it can be judged as an aesthetic failure.

If a biblical story is meant to teach a moral lesson that is no longer held to be moral, then likewise that narrative is an aesthetic failure, or its artistry can be judged to be irrelevant or even reprehensible for us. In any case, we usually do not see biblical aestheticians engaging in any sort of ethical reflection when evaluating the artistry of biblical narratives. If they espouse some form of aesthetic autonomism, they are not explicit about it, nor do they seem very interested in articulating a defense of it.

One rare scholar who espouses a form of ethicism is Alan Cooper, a professor of Bible at the Jewish Theological Seminary. In a scathing review of The Literary Guide to the Bible, Cooper notes that "nothing in the volume is as perverse as a contributor's characterization of Lam[entations] 2:8 as `lovely.'"77 That text, which is about the destruction of Jerusalem, reads: "The LORD determined to lay in ruins the wall of the daughter of Zion; he marked it off by the line; he restrained not his hand from destroying; he caused rampart and wall to lament, they languish together." Cooper rightly prefaces these remarks with an observation about Alter's lack of clear criteria for what constitutes literary excellence. If it is perverse to call Lamentations 2:8 beautiful, certainly we can make the same case for many passages in the Bible.

But if we return to the example of Daniel Pearl, would it be unreasonable to judge all poetry celebrating violence as obscene? Or would we excuse it by saying that the times were different? In reality, the times are not different.

Religious believers are still beheading those regarded as enemies. Religious believers are still celebrating atrocities with chants, dance, and songs, as was the case in Palestinian territories during September 11.

Yet consider the example found in Susan Niditch's War in the Hebrew Bible. In speaking of a "bardic" tradition about war she remarks:

> The bardic tradition, so called because of the beautiful traditional-style narration in which much of the material is preserved, presents a view of war that glorifies warriors, their courage, daring, leadership, and skill.78

But what is part of this "beautiful," traditional style of narration? The example that immediately precedes Niditch's discussion is the story of the beheading of Goliath by David in 1 Samuel 17.

Similarly, when one surveys the scholarly literature on Psalm 137, one of the most vicious poems found in the Hebrew Bible, one usually sees scholars fixated on the poetic value rather than on any critique of the violence endorsed in that piece. The brief Psalm reads in its entirety:

> By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our lyres. For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How shall we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land? If I forget you, 0 Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy! Remember, 0 LORD, against the E'domites the day of Jerusalem, how they said, "Rase it, rase it! Down to its foundations!"
>
> O daughter of Babylon, you devastator! Happy shall he be who requites you with what you have done to us! Happy shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!

If dashing babies against rocks does not qualify as unethical, then what does?

Yet a brief and unscientific survey of the most recent five years (2001 through 2005) of Old Testament Abstracts, which serves as a record of biblical

scholarship around the world, is instructive.79 The total number of discussions of Psalm 137 or any portion of it is sixteen. Of these sixteen, at least six are devoted to reinterpreting the violence or to pleas for new ways to appreciate the psalm in modern life and liturgy.80 At least three discussions concentrate on highly technical aesthetics, such as colometry, rhetorical analysis, or musical features.81 Others focus on historical issues related to the psalm and its history of interpretation.82 One does focus on how it has affected notions of "hate."83 None, however, use the psalm to repudiate it, eject it from the canon, or as an argument to reject the whole Bible for endorsing violence in any portion.

Mitchell Dahood, who wrote a standard commentary on the Psalms, describes the language of this psalm as "marked by originality and vividness."84 What is "original" Dahood does not say, and the "vividness" seems to be a euphemism for plain goriness and brutality. To be fair, Dahood does note that the psalm is "shocking" and that it bears "bitter imprecations," but then he goes on to excuse these features by saying that the author's "desire for the extermination of his country's destroyer must be judged in the light of customs prevailing in his age."85 Imagine if someone argued that Hitler's actions are not so bad when judged by the standards prevailing in Nazi Germany.

More illuminating is Dahood's comments on verse nine, which constitutes the most brutal part of the psalm: "The poet balances these two firstcolon verbs with the two nouns `your infants' and `the rock' in the second colon ... the practice of Oriental warfare spared neither women nor children in a war of extermination."86 In short, the poetic features of the text are extolled, and the violence is excused.

SUMMARY

Literary criticism of the Bible is suffering from a crisis that is besetting all of literature. On the one hand, the old rationales for studying literature no longer seem self-evident. For example, it is not clear that literature enhances "mental discipline," a famous rationale used in the famous Yale Report, which desperately sought to justify requiring the study of the classics in a modern university.87 The question of the canon has become much more polarized, with other voices clamoring to be part of the canon.88

Nonetheless, justifying literary studies of the Bible still poses a special set of

problems. First, biblical scholars have failed to provide a coherent rationale for why biblical literature is better than that of many other cultures. When asked what differentiated the Bible from Shakespeare, Phyllis Trible, a feminist apologist for the Bible, and the president of the Society of Biblical Literature in 1994, could only reply, "I ask myself that question, and if I had a clear answer, I would give it to you."89

Second, the Bible has been studied far longer than any other text. So why invest any more time in this text when there are so many others that have yet to be studied? If the Bible is kept because of its supposed moral lessons, then why not allow that the many ancient texts that are still unknown to the modem world might also have worthy lessons? Likewise, aesthetic worth can be found in many ancient texts, and so the Bible cannot be privileged on those grounds either.

Third, the question of relevance is particularly acute for ancient texts such as the Bible. With all due respect to Ackerman, why should we care that Esau is portrayed the way he is? How does knowing anything about biblical characters or biblical poetic structures help us to become better people or to solve any practical problems in the modern world? That is why the notion that the Bible must be studied for its "intrinsic value" also fails as yet another meaningless and undefinable feature meant only to maintain the privilege of that text.

But let us say that literature is a beneficial part of our human experience, which should be celebrated along with the humanities.90 The problem is that such a rationale overlooks how the Bible also has been detrimental to human beings. For every page of Hamlet that we might enjoy innocently, there is a passage of the Bible that prompted someone to kill another human being. One can't say that about Hamlet. The differential in detrimental effect is also a main argument for ending a privileged status for the Bible in any modern canon.

NOTES

1. For a brief but lucid exposition, see Norman C. Habel, Literary Criticism of the Old Testament (Minneapolis: Ausburg Fortress, 1971).

2. For a recent discussion of the status of studies of the Pentateuch, see Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid, Farewell to the Yahwist? The

Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretations (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006); Anthony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, Rethinking the Pentateuch: Prolegomena to the Theology of Ancient Israel (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005); E. Theodore Mullen, Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations: A New Approach to the Formation of the Pentateuch (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997). Also useful is Rolf Rendtorff, "What Happened to the Yahwist?" SBL Forum 2006, available online at http://www.sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?Articleld=553 (accessed September 14, 2006).

3. J. Cheryl Exum and David J. A. Clines, eds., The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), p. 11.

4. See Edgar V. McKnight and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, eds., The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994). See also, Frank Lentricchia, After the New Criticism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

5. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, eds., The Literary Guide to the Bible (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Alter, The Art of Biblical Poetry (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Meir Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

6. Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, p. 189.

7. Alter and Kermode, The Literary Guide to the Bible.

8. Ibid., p. 2.

9. Ibid.

10. Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, p. 13.

11. Joe Sprinkle, "Literary Approaches to the Old Testament," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 32, no. 3 (September 1989): 309.

12. Ibid.

13. For overviews, see Jerrold Levinson, ed., The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Robert Stecker, Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: An Introduction (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005). An older but excellent treatment is found in Moshe Barasch, Theories of Art: From Plato to Winckelmann (New York: New York University Press, 1985).

14. Aristotle, Poetics, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, LCL 199 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 4.3: io tie yap ujisiG6at 6vμ4viovtiois avOpchrzots LK 1tatSwv AGTI itKwtiaiov £6'Ct Kai 'Cas μaOij6ets T[OtEiat 8ta 'Cas zcpwias, Kai xaipety 'tots μtμ~μart TGav'tas.

15. Ibid., 7.9: do yap K&Ov ev tsyeOet Kai timer eGCiV.

16. Ibid., 22.3-4: ...i tiois *evtxois Kexprjμevrj*. evtxov 8e y?,witiav Kaiμe'CaOopav Kai eztSKtiaGty Kai zcav ti6 zcapa ti6 Kvptov.

17. Summa Theologica, Part I, Q. 39 a8/ Benziger edition, 1:201. The Latin text reads: "Nam al pulchritudinem tria requiruntur. Primo quidem integritas, live perfectio. Quae enim diminuta cunt, hoc ipso turpia cunt. Et debita proportio, live consonantia." Our citations of the Summa Theologica are from the first complete American edition in three volumes, translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947). The Latin text follows Divi Thomae Aquinatis, Summa Theologica (Rome: Forzani, 1923).

18. Leon Battista Alberti, De reAedificatoria, book 6, chapter 2. My adapted translation of the English edition in Alberti, On the Art of Building in Ten Books, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 156. For the Latin text and Italian text, we depend on Alberti, L'architettura (De re aedificatoria), trans. Giovanni Orlandi (Milan: Edizione Il Polifilo, 1966), 2:446-47. In Italian: "definiremo la bellezza come 1' armonia tra tutte le membra, nell'unita di cui fan parte, fondata copra una Legge precisa, per modo the non si possa aggiungere o togliere o cambiare nulla se non in peggio. In Latin: "sic deffiniemus: ut sit pulchritudo quidem certa cum ratione concinnitas universarum partium in eo, cuius lint, ita ut addi aut diminui aut

immutari possit nihil quin improbabilius reddatur." Rykwert's translation and mine still cannot articulate well Alberti's Latin use of "concinnitas," a concept that dates back to Cicero, which may be equated with the inherent and universal laws of nature (notice the Italian, "fondata sopre una Legge precisa").

19. See Leonardo da Vinci, A Treatise on Painting, trans. John Francis Rigaud (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002).

20. See ibid., p. 135: "The first things that disappear, by being removed to some distance, are the outlines or boundaries of objects."

21. See Jonathan Harris, The New Art History: A Critical Introduction (London: Routledge, 2001); John Barrell, The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Paintings 1730-1840 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

22. Sakae Kubo and Walter F. Specht, So Many Versions? Twentieth Century English Versions of the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), p. 234.

23. Ibid.

24. The text is from Miriam Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, 3 vols. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 2:82.

25. See also James Kugel, The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 140-41.

26. Robert Lowth, Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004), p. 22.

27. Ibid., p. 18.

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Chapter 6

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY: THE PATHOLOGY OF BIBLIOLATRY

an n insightful essay on the status of biblical theology, the prominent biblical scholar John J. Collins proclaimed, "Biblical theology is a subject in decline ... its place even among the biblical sciences is in doubt."' In an attempt to stem this decline, Leo Perdue, another prominent biblical scholar, issued this warning in 2005:

> If biblical studies ignores theology and issues of existential concern, it evokes little interest and lacks any utilitarian use in the contemporary world struggling with issues of peace, justice, and even survival, save among nations searching for legitimation or a small number of pedantic scholars who fine some satisfaction in the obscure and irrelevant.'

Such a warning exposes the fact that biblical scholars have become their own terminators. What is left is to provide a postmortem pathological report of the corpse.

Contrary to Perdue, I argue in this chapter that biblical theology should end because it is not a scholarly discipline that can yield anything of use for modern human beings. In particular, we show that biblical theology: (1) primarily is an apologetic endeavor that functions to maintain the value and authority of the Bible in the modern world; (2) often is selective and arbitrary in judging what counts as "central" or "significant" features of biblical thought; and (3) violates many of its own stated goals and assumptions.

Our demonstration entails a comparison of five academic socioreligious traditions within Christianity and Judaism: (1) Walther Eichrodt, who represents an influential and traditional European theologian; (2) Walter Brueggemann, who exemplifies a current American postmodernist approach; (3) Jon D. Levenson, who illustrates a Jewish approach; (4) feminist theology, represented primarily by Phyllis Trible; and (5) liberation theology, a movement that has

made the most thorough effort to apply biblical theology in solving real world problems.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Like other disciplines within biblical studies, biblical theology has a complex and contested history.3 For our purposes, we refer to biblical theology as an enterprise that purports to describe the ideas about God and his interaction with humanity that are expressed by biblical authors. But biblical theology usually is not satisfied with such descriptions. Rather, the descriptions provided by biblical theologians often function to inform current applications of those biblical ideas. As such, biblical theology is a thoroughly religionist endeavor.

Historically, the origins of biblical theology are placed in the Reformation era, when Protestant pioneers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin focused on scripture as the supreme authority for Christian life, in opposition to the Roman Catholic Church's claim that its interpretation of the Bible was the supreme authority.4

Within the constellation of those who helped to define the concept of biblical theology, the name of Johann Philip Gabler (1753-1826) is often placed at the forefront. In 1787, Gabler was appointed to the theological faculty of the University of Altdorf. His inauguration in that post included a lecture titled "On the justified distinction between biblical theology and dogmatic [theology] and the Correct Ultimate Objectives."5 For Gabler, a systematic biblical theology should be descriptive and historical. It should be an inductive enterprise in which facts are collected and placed in their historical context. In contrast, dogmatic theology is more about what Christians should .6

James Barr, a prominent scholar of the history of biblical theology, provides a useful typology for Old Testament theologies, which also summarizes some of the history of biblical theology in the last century or so. We adapt Barr's summary as follows:'

Principle		Best Example
1.	Collection of ideas and doctrines on a pattern said to follow that of traditional systematic theology	Ludwig Köhler[8]
2.	Synthetic, comprehensive view of the Old Testament world of faith	Walther Eichrodt
3.	Explicit Christian approach working with a Christian view of revelation	T. C. Vriezen[9]
4.	Following out of development of various traditions with their own inner reinterpretations and actualizations	Gerhard von Rad[10]
5.	"Canonical" approaches.	Brevard Childs[11]

No matter which type one prefers, the lesson is that there is no such thing as a unified "biblical theology," nor can there be. Indeed, the very concept of "the Bible" is dependent on which religion one accepts. For example, Judaism does not consider the New Testament to be part of "the Bible," and so it is obvious that nothing in that part of the Protestant Christian Bible can be used to construct any unified picture of God in Judaism. Nonetheless, we now demonstrate this through a more detailed study of some representative biblical theologians and movements.

WALTHER EICHRODT

To illustrate how arbitrary and ultimately useless biblical theology has been, we begin with the work of the German scholar Walther Eichrodt (1890-1978), who has been called one of the most influential biblical theologians of the past century. James Barr comments, "It is probable that, of the Old Testament Theologies written during the central period 1930-1980, the majority followed something roughly like Eichrodt's general approach."12 In general, Eichrodt believed that the purpose of Old Testament theology is "to construct a complete picture of the OT realm of belief." 13

In particular, Eichrodt affirmed that the idea of a "covenant" (Hebrew: ri"u; pronounced berith) was the center of every part of the Old Testament: "[I]t can

be demonstrated that the covenant-union between Yahweh and Israel is an original element in all sources, despite their being in part in very fragmentary form."14 For Eichrodt, the idea of covenant is a great advance because with the establishment of the covenant "an atmosphere of trust and security is created, in which they [the Israelites] find both the strength for a willing surrender to the will of God and joyful courage to grapple with the problems of life." 15

One need not look far to see how flawed and biased Eichrodt was in his formulation. First, the concept of covenant was missing from many important biblical works. Eichrodt himself acknowledges that in many places the Hebrew word "berith," usually translated as covenant, was not present. Nonetheless, he contended that the concept was present or could be inferred.

The Christian bias is very evident. He sees the covenant idea in the Old Testament as complementary to the New Testament picture of God. He notes that the Old Testament does not envision God as pure spirit, because its writers were not yet at the stage of development found in Christianity. For Eichrodt, "[o]nly the Christian faith has been able to accommodate the recognition of God's spiritual nature without prejudice to his immediacy in religion, because it has its focus in the person of Jesus."16

Otherwise, Eichrodt does not hide his ethnocentric and religiocentric contempt for other religions. The whole idea of "covenant" functions as an instrument to show the superiority of biblical religion. Eichrodt, in fact, was explicitly reacting against emergent comparative religion approaches that threatened to deprivilege the contribution of Hebrew religion to the world.

One area in which Eichrodt argued Israelite religion was superior was in divorcing God from natural elements. The personification of natural elements, such as storms or wind, bespoke of the irrational and arbitrary manner in which non-Israelites conceptualized their deities. There was no rhyme or reason why a storm destroyed some areas and not others. Since the gods were mere representations of natural phenomena, the gods were as unpredictable as the natural elements. In addition, Eichrodt characterized "Nature religions" as closely tied to "orgiastic practices" ("orgiastischen Brauche") because they were permeated by magical thinking that mimicked natural processes. 17

Major discoveries at Ugarit, among other places, show that Yahweh is not as

divorced from natural phenomena as Eichrodt would make it appear. Yahweh is very much a storm god.'8 When the Hebrews saw a thunderstorm coming, they believed that they were witnessing the appearance of Yahweh himself. Yahweh appears amid lightning, fire, and thunder just like many of the storm gods of the ancient Near East, including Zeus, Baal, and Hadad (see Exodus 15:8; 19:16-19).

Some of the storm god epithets applied to Yahweh are applied almost verbatim to Hadad. Thus, Hadad is called "rider of the clouds" in Ugaritic literature and Yahweh is called "rider of the clouds" in Psalm 68:4 (68:5 in the Hebrew Bible)." In the ancient Near East, some gods fight against the sea, and the biblical Yahweh also fights against the sea (see Job 26:10-12). There is no reason to argue that the biblical writings treated as symbolic or metaphorical what neighboring religions considered literal.

Eichrodt believed that the concept of God being in a "covenant" relation with a people eliminated the arbitrary and irrational aspect of non-Hebrew deities. A covenant provided an agreement between the deity and Israel that was understandable and linked very clearly to specific behaviors, among other things.

Yet it is clear that Eichrodt's concept of the covenant as a rational instrument encounters problems that even he has to grudgingly acknowledge. Thus, he tells us that "because Israel shared the conception of God common to the whole of the ancient East, she also assumed that the proximate motive of divine anger must be some human transgression, regardless of whether anyone was aware of the transgression or not. 1120 In other words, Israel's concept of God is not so unique, and Israelites still are left to wonder why any particular misfortune has befallen them.

In fact, one can make a good case that the covenant was a setback for whole classes of Israelites. If one reads Deuteronomy 28, one sees that the covenant makes a very clear equation: Illness = sin; health and well-being = sinlessness. But this was not the experience of Israelites. And so we find repeated complaints that they are suffering for unknown reasons. The entire book of Job is a complaint about how arbitrary God can be.

In the sphere of ethics, the whole idea of the covenant was supposed to end "human arbitrariness and relativism" because it brought forth the idea of a law

based on the metaphysical.21 Eichrodt argues that "a further noteworthy characteristic of Israelite law is the abolition of gross brutality in the punishment of the guilty."22 Moreover, he contends that Israelite law abolished class distinctions in its administration of justice, and that "we hear nothing of any special law for the priesthood or for the aristocracy."23 According to Eichrodt, "there is nowhere any mention of the raping of women by Israelite warriors."24

Of course, what counts as "gross brutality" for Eichrodt is mystifying in light of the biblical texts. If stoning rebellious children (Deuteronomy 21:18-21), burning daughters of priests suspected of fornication (Leviticus 21:9), killing women and children (1 Samuel 15:1), or beheading (1 Samuel 17:5 1) is not considered "gross brutality," then what would be? It is also clear that foreigners can be treated differently than Israelites, as the genocidal acts against the peoples of Canaan clearly show (Deuteronomy 7). Similarly, under biblical law slaves can be beaten to near death without incurring a great penalty (Exodus 21:20-21). This alone refutes the idea that there were no class distinctions in administering justice. And Eichrodt seems oblivious to the clear cases where God commands Israelite warriors to take captive women as sex slaves (Numbers 31:17-18).

The case of David also shows that aristocrats could be treated differently. In 2 Samuel 11, we are told that David impregnated Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, while the latter was away fighting for Israel. Eventually, David conspires to place Uriah at the battlefront, where death is certain. Second Samuel 12:9 tells us that God, speaking through the prophet Nathan, regards David himself as the murderer of Uriah. Yet David is not executed as would be demanded by biblical law. In fact, God decides to kill David's son instead of David, something that contradicts yet another law in Deuteronomy 24:16, where it is clearly stated, "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children; nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers. Every man shall be put to death for his own sin." Furthermore, God himself is quoted as saying, "I will not acquit the guilty" (Exodus 23:7; NRSV).

Similarly, Eichrodt is arbitrary in differentiating what counts as a Canaanite practice, which is usually designated an illegitimate practice, and what counts as an authentic or essential Israelite practice. This arbitrariness is evident when he attempts to prove that Israel's neighbors localized their god as a god of a territory or as the god of the capital city while Israel had a more lofty and transcendent idea of God as relating to a people. Thus, he claims that while "the Assyrians

may have spoken of Yahweh as the `the God of the land of Samaria' (II Kings 17.26f; 18.34f) ... the Israelites never spoke of God thus."25

Such notions are contradicted not only by the biblical record but also by newer discoveries. At Kuntillet `Ajrud, a place in southern Israel, we find inscriptions dated to around the ninth to eighth centuries BCE.26 One of these inscriptions, which were published in the 1970s, speaks of the "Yahweh of Samaria," the very type of designation Eichrodt tells us we would not find among Israelites. He claims that the designations of Yahweh as the God of Dan or Beersheba were denounced by Hebrew prophets (e.g., in Amos 8:14) precisely because they were Canaanite imports. But that alone tells us that such localized designations were found among Israelites. To say that this was an import even though almost every other major concept can be found among Israel's neighbors is the height of arbitrariness.

The finds at Kuntillet `Ajrud also effectively defeat another of Eichrodt's pronouncements: "Yahweh never had a consort; and thus any idea that he needed to be complemented-a fate which befell all the other major Semitic deities-was rejected.1121 In fact, at Kuntillet `Ajrud we find inscriptions that are plausibly translated as "To [Y]ahweh (of) Teiman, and to his Asherah."28 Inscriptions dated to the eighth century BCE, and with similar references to Asherah as Yahweh's consort, were published earlier by William G. Dever at another site named Khirbet el-Q6m.29

Covenants were not as benign as Eichrodt would have them. Covenants were instruments of imperialism and slavery-Yahweh was the slavemaster and Israel was his slave. As is the case with any slave, Yahweh rewarded his subjects for obedience and punished them mercilessly for disobedience. He required genital mutilation, called circumcision, of all of his slaves. Far from providing a sense of security, the covenant caused the Israelites to dread the punishment that followed transgressions against it. Only one slavemaster was allowed, and a slave risked serious harm if he did not remain faithful to the one slavemaster. As is stated in Exodus 20:1, 5:

> You shall have no other gods before me ... you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me.

And Deuteronomy 28 is very explicit and detailed about all of the punishments that awaited those who disobeyed Yahweh, the master:

> But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you ... The LORD will send upon you curses, confusion, and frustration, in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly, on account of the evil of your doings, because you have forsaken me. The LORD will make the pestilence cleave to you until he has consumed you off the land which you are entering to take possession of it. The LORD will smite you with consumption, and with fever, inflammation, and fiery heat, and with drought, and with blasting, and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish. (Deuteronomy 28:15-22)

Contrary to Eichrodt, this litany of punishments is not designed to make one rest assured. Instead, one must constantly examine oneself for possible violations. A slave of Yahweh must not rest comfortably. As Proverbs 24:21-22 tells us: "My son, fear the LORD and the king, and do not disobey either of them; for disaster from them will rise suddenly, and who knows the ruin that will come from them both?" Thus, it is no secret to biblical authors that fear and terror are instruments of Yahweh's rule.

In the end, there is no center to the Bible that anyone has been able to find. Eichrodt's "covenantal" concept can be exposed as simply another apologetic device to showcase the superiority of biblical religion. The supposed benign and superior features of Israel's covenant either are nonexistent or disguise an instrument for suppressing the liberating and benign advance of humanity.

WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

It is important to examine Walter Brueggemann's approach to biblical theology because it is supposed to represent a more postmodern and nontraditional enterprise that is mindful of the pitfalls of the past. Brueggemann (1933-) is the McPheeters Professor of Old Testament Emeritus at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. In many ways, he typifies the ascendance of Americans in biblical theology. He is widely cited and was sufficiently popular among his colleagues to have served as president of the Society of Biblical

Literature (1990).

If one examines his main work (Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy) on the subject, Brueggemann centers his theology as "speech about God."30 In actuality, such a definition follows the etymology of "theology" (God-speech) relatively closely. Insofar as Brueggemann is concerned, "for Old Testament faith, the utterance is everything."31 In addition, Brueggemann places speech about God within the larger metaphorical context of the courtroom. For Brueggemann, speech about God functions as testimony. His theme of "testimony" forms four main sections of the book (Israel's core testimony; Israel's countertestimony; Israel's unsolicited testimony; and Israel's embodied testimony).

Brueggemann writes within the context of an epistemology that claims that Enlightenment philosophy is just as much a faith-based approach as is biblical theology. But as with most postmodernists, this is not really a case of rejecting the Enlightenment but rather more a case of picking and choosing which parts of the Enlightenment he likes. He often uses ill-defined words, such as "reductionist," to denigrate the theologies or ideas of which he disapproves.

At first glance, Brueggemann leads us to believe that Old Testament theology can be divorced from what the church believes. As he phrases it, "The truth of the matter, on any careful reading and without any tendentiousness, is that Old Testament theological articulation does not conform to established church faith, either in its official declaration or in its more popular propensities."32 He declares, "It is my urging that a serious Old Testament student, situated in an ecclesial community, has a responsibility to do careful reading of the Old Testament and to present to the ecclesial community not only those readings that confirm church theology, but also (and perhaps especially) those that clash with, challenge, and undermine seemingly settled church theology."33 Yet he contradicts this elsewhere by saying that "[i]t is nonetheless the case that Scripture cannot be understood apart from the ongoing role of communal tradition." 34

And it is not long before we find out that Brueggemann simply repeats long-held Christian reductionistic cliches about the supposed centrality of human dignity and justice found in the Bible. He tells us, "It is important to accent that something like `God's preferential option for the poor' is deeply rooted in Israel's

testimony, so deeply rooted as to be characteristic and definitional for Israel's speech about God."35 He tells us that Israel's God, "full of sovereign power and committed in solidarity to the needy, and especially to Israel in need-dominates the narrative of Israel's liturgy and imagination (cf. Dent. 10:12-22)."36

The first problem is that Brueggemann, much like almost every other biblical theologian, never establishes criteria for what is "characteristic and definitional." Is it a statistical criterion? That is to say, is it the number of times a specific concept or term is repeated? Or is it qualitative? That is to say, is it something said to be the most important concept, regardless of how many times others are repeated? If one looks at the very text Brueggemann cites, Deuteronomy 10:12-22, one may come to a very different conclusion about what is "characteristic and definitional" in Deuteronomy, or in biblical theology.

> And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I command you this day for your good? Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it; yet the LORD set his heart in love upon your fathers and chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as at this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner therefore; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve him and cleave to him, and by his name you shall swear. He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you these great and terrible things which your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons; and now the LORD your God has made you as the stars of heaven for multitude. (Deuteronomy 10:12-22)

True enough, the text speaks about how Yahweh cares about justice for the widow and how he loves the stranger.

But the text also repeatedly emphasizes how the Israelites should "fear" and

"serve" and "love" Yahweh with all their soul. Verbs commanding obligation toward Yahweh outnumber any commandments to be nice to widows or strangers. Statistically, we could make the case that this passage makes slavery to Yahweh "characteristic and definitional" of Israel's status. Verse 14 speaks of how the earth belongs to Yahweh, and we could just as well make the case that Yahweh's imperialism is "characteristic and definitional," not some preferential option for the poor.

And how does loving and taking care of the stranger coincide with the genocide of the Canaanites that is also mentioned in other parts of Deuteronomy? Why could we not make the case that genocide of any stranger not favored by Yahweh is "characteristic and definitional"? To explain such genocide, Brueggemann lapses back into a technique wellknown among fundamentalists, who also pick and choose what to take literally and what not to take literally. Brueggemann tells us that such genocidal texts are really "a theological construct without any historical base."37 This, of course, assumes that talk about "justice" is also not "a theological construct without any historical base."

Another technique by which Brueggemann privileges a biblical theological concept he favors is by invoking the popular but ultimately meaningless idea of a "trajectory." A trajectory is apparently the degree of prominence one can extrapolate for a particular concept. This allows a theologian to claim that while the Bible bears many objectionable beliefs and practices it is generally heading toward a good goal. For example, Michael Coogan tells us that "the Bible is the beginning of a trajectory leading toward full freedom and equality for all persons."38

Brueggemann knows, for instance, that the concept of "justice" and "holiness" seem to be in conflict sometimes. "Holiness," for Brueggemann involves the idea that God is jealous "for God's own self."39 Justice involves "Yahweh's preferential option for the ordering of a neighborly community."40 Brueggemann speaks of a "Deuteronomic emphasis on justice and the Priestly accent on holiness ."4' By "Priestly" he refers to the corpus mainly preserved in Leviticus, which does speak a lot about ritual purity.

Christians who are against the inclusion of homosexuals in any part of the church hierarchy often invoke injunctions about sexual purity. So how does

Brueggemann decide whether "justice" or "holiness" is the most important part of biblical theology? He tells us that "the justice trajectory has decisively and irreversibly defeated the purity trajectory. Thus, the purity trajectory of the text may help us understand pastorally the anxiety produced by perceived disorder, but it provides no warrant for exclusionary ethical decisions in the face of the gospel."42 Thus, homosexuality should be tolerated.

When we look at how Brueggemann sees Israel's view of Yahweh's fidelity and trustworthiness, we find views very similar to those of the supposedly more traditional Eichrodt. Recall that Eichrodt believed that Israel sought to overcome the caprice and unpredictability of the gods that mirrored nature. Eichrodt thought that the covenant functioned to provide a type of stability in the relationship between Yahweh and Israel that was not found elsewhere. Similarly, Brueggemann tells us,

> Moreover, Israel lived in a religious world that was saturated with gods, and with religious talk about gods, who were fickle and petty and who functioned in terms of bribery and flattery. At the center of Israel's liturgical life and derivative ethical reflection, we find the belief that at the core of life is a Presence (not a principle), an Actor and Agent, who is marked by fidelity and trustworthiness.43

At once, we see parallels to Eichrodt's idea of a "center" for the Bible and the superiority of the Hebrew conception of God.

Yet on the very next page Brueggemann must reverse himself somewhat in his discussion of Exodus 34:6-7, which says:

> The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation. (Exodus 34:6-7)

As Brueggemann notes, there seems to be a contradiction between a Yahweh who acts "for Israel" and a Yahweh who is "intensely and fiercely for Yahweh's

own self."44 That is to say, Yahweh is portrayed both as forgiving and as exacting "justice" even from the innocent descendants of an offender.

After acknowledging the inconsistency in Israel's view of God, Brueggemann concludes that "there is a profound, unresolved ambiguity in Yahweh's life. As a consequence, in any moment of Yahweh's life with Israel, Yahweh has available more than one alternative response to Israel, and Israel is never fully, finally certain of Yahweh's inclination toward it."45 But how does experiencing such uncertainty in Yahweh's actions differ from the experience of non-Israelites, whose gods are described as "fickle and petty"?

And what about the claim that Yahweh is supposedly exempt from a desire for flattery or bribery? We can posit such an exemption only by defining bribery and flattery in arbitrary ways. The Psalms alone testify to the incessant need for "praising" Yahweh. In Psalm 6:5, one author asks God to rescue him from death because otherwise there might not be anyone to praise God. The Psalms repeatedly exhort Yahweh's servants to praise him (e.g., Psalms 99:3, 100:4, 113:1). The difference between praise and flattery is indeed difficult to understand if both describe actions meant to gain Yahweh's favor by acknowledging his superiority or other supposedly good traits.

If we define bribery as the attempt to pay for some benefit otherwise not due the recipient, then it is difficult to even make sense of what this means when it involves a deity. By definition, anything God bestows is legitimate no matter what sort of payment was given. Anything paid would be legitimate. By the same token, why would anything granted by other gods not be due to a recipient if the gods have so determined to bestow it?

In fact, Brueggemann's comments about bribery seem to ignore the whole system of vows in Yahwism. Vows are made to gain benefits from Yahweh in return for some sort of payment. There are cases where the payment is truly horrific. Witness the case of Jephthah's daughter in Judges 11.

> And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, and said, "If thou wilt give the Ammonites into my hand, then whoever comes forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be the LORD's, and I will offer him up for a burnt offering." So Jephthah crossed over to the Ammonites to fight against them; and the

LORD gave them into his hand. (Judges 11:30-31)

One may ask why Jephthah has to provide anything to Yahweh before the latter bestows victory for his people. Could it be that Jephthah and the biblical author did believe that Yahweh required payment for benefits? If not, why would the story make any sense to an audience who did not expect such transactions to be normal? More importantly, we see that Yahweh accepts the transaction and keeps his side of the bargain by defeating Jephthah's enemies.

In fact, we learn that it was Jephthah's daughter who was the first to meet him after his return, and so he sacrificed her to Yahweh. Some commentators attempt to mitigate the implications of this vow by using it as an example of a rash or foolish vow. Nonetheless, the story tells us that Yahweh did not intervene. Nor did he stop such a horrendous human sacrifice in the manner that he had done in the case of Abraham's son (Genesis 22:12ff).

If Yahweh cares so much about the poor and the innocent, as Brueggemann makes it appear, where was the justice for this poor innocent girl? The question of how such a transaction differs from bribery or why it should be less morally reprehensible, even if not considered bribery, simply unmasks the hopeless ethical quagmire called biblical theology. Judging by his scriptural index, Brueggemann is silent about this episode.

In general, Brueggemann is a bibliolatrist. He privileges the Bible as a book that somehow has good lessons to teach us, especially because of its supposed preferential option for the poor and its justice trajectory, which can apparently whitewash all the genocide, infanticide, and imperialism that we could just as easily nominate as the Bible's "characteristic and definitional" speech about God.

Eugene H. Merrill, a conservative Christian scholar, has argued that Brueggemann's whole idea that the Bible "speaks equivocally according to the insights and demands of whichever community happens to be reading it, loses its claim to intrinsic authority and unambiguous testimony."46 Of course, Merrill is also reading the Bible according to the demands of his community (Christianity). Overall, Brueggemann shares the bond of bibliolatry with conservatives, but he offers even more fuliginous rhetoric on behalf of the superiority and relevance of his Bible. If Brueggemann were really a postmodernist, he would advocate the complete overthrow of the text itself, and he would not have written a work of

biblical theology in the first place.

JON D. LEVENSON

Jon D. Levenson, the Albert A. List Professor of Jewish Studies at Harvard Divinity School, exemplifies a modern Jewish approach to biblical theology. We use the word "theology" with great caution in the case of Levenson because he explicitly affirms that biblical theology can barely be found, if at all, in Jewish scholarship. He begins one of his major critiques of biblical theology with a story about how impotent he felt when a friend asked him to refer him to a Jewish biblical theology to balance those found in Christianity. Levenson reflected and concluded that "whereas Christians have written scores of books and articles with `Old Testament Theology,' or the like as their titles, I know of no book with that title or anything similar ("Theology of the Hebrew Bible," "Biblical Theology") written by a Jew."47

Yet James Barr pointed out how Levenson's antipathy toward some coherent biblical theology seems contradicted by Levenson's own previous book, The Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48.48 In fact, there are a few very prominent Jewish scholars who despite any past aversion or apathy toward theology believe that theology is now a good word. Jacob Neusner, perhaps the most prolific author in religious studies, describes his own increasingly sympathetic attitude toward "theology," and he even titled one of his essays "Theology Comes Home." He argued in that essay for "an equal but separate" venue for theology in academia.49

In general, Levenson is an ardent critic of the use of the historicalcritical method.50 One of his complaints is that the historicalcritical method is mainly a cover for Protestant liberal theology. And we certainly agree with his observation that "the motivation of most historical critics of the Hebrew Bible continues to be religious in character. It is a rare scholar in the field whose past does not include an intense Christian or Jewish commitment."51

To be fair, though, we should note that Levenson does not wish to delete the historicalcritical method, per se. In fact, he believes that this method "should not be abandoned within pluralistic settings."52 However, he does want to abandon "its totalistic claims."53 For him, the historicalcritical method cannot claim to be the only method for the study of the Bible. In particular, he derides the

historicalcritical method's insistence that the original meaning of a text is the only meaning that counts.

Levenson further chides academic scholars who practice ideological criticism, which involves the premise that texts have sociopolitical meanings of which authors or users of those texts usually are not aware. In this regard, he cites with approval the remarks of Leszek Kolakowski, who argues against outside observers (e.g., academic anthropologists, scholars) who

> assert that when people speak of God or the gods, of invisible forces purposely operating behind empirical facts, of the sacred qualities of things, they are in fact, and without knowing it, speaking of something entirely different.54

Levenson sees such outsider interpretations as a form of claimed revelation because outsiders are asserting "a definitive insight, not empirically derived, into the meaning of things, even things that they have never directly experienced and that are interpreted very differently by those who have."55

Likewise, Levenson is a critic of "historicism," which seems to mean, for him, the idea that "all human thoughts or beliefs are historical, and hence deservedly destined to perish."" Otherwise, "historicism" is equated with historical relativism, or the idea that all ideas (including scientific ones) are simply expressions of the culture of a particular historical period that have no objective reality or universal validity. Levenson objects that this would make historicism itself just another idea that cannot assert any validity beyond its own historical context. In addition, such an assertion must necessarily acknowledge that historicism is itself a product of the very Enlightenment it opposes.

But Levenson overgeneralizes about historicism. Just as there are few, if any, "literalists" who take everything literally, there are few historicists who would argue that all observations are a total product of culture or historical situation.57 Levenson, in fact, never cites any so-called historicists who make such an absolute claim. Moreover, it is not clear how Levenson himself is exempt from using historicism to explain the historicalcritical method, especially as he assigns the origins of that method to a Protestant milieu.

In general, Levenson's entire discussion of historicism is permeated by a

very confused epistemology because he fails to see the difference between conclusions based on verifiable evidence and conclusions not based on verifiable evidence. Let's return to Levenson's criticism of academic outsiders who claim "a definitive insight, not empirically derived, into the meaning of things, even things that they have never directly experienced and that are interpreted very differently by those who have." Apparently, Levenson assumes that people have "experienced" things, even supernatural things, simply because they claim to have had such experiences. Otherwise, why should we not interpret claimed supernatural experiences differently?

Consider the case of a secular anthropologist observing a communal prayer to a god. The anthropologist cannot verify that there is a supernatural being with whom a group of praying people are communicating. That is why a secular anthropologist would not accept a practitioner's own explanation.58 Instead, the anthropologist might conclude that such a ritual is a way for believers to express their desires and fears.

This is no more a case of "historicism" than if Levenson were to observe someone praying to invisible Martians and conclude that since invisible Mar tians cannot be verified to exist, some other explanation based on verifiable phenomena is appropriate. For example, we can verify that people can and do express their wishes to entities that they believe exist. We can verify, for example, that children express their desires to Santa Claus. We could even invent a character, convince our children of its existence, and verify again that our children are capable of reporting communication with a nonexistent entity. Would it be absurd for an outsider to conclude that because the existence of such characters cannot be verified the children's actions must be explained otherwise?

Such a conclusion by an outside observer is not really a case of "historicism." Rather, it is a case of applying empirico-rationalist procedures in making a conclusion. It is a matter of deciding whether one of two (or more) competing claims best accords with phenomena that can be empirically verified to exist. We cannot verify that there is a god who receives prayer, but we can verify that people do express fears and desires to beings who are not real (or who cannot be verified to exist). Nor is it really a case of such anthropologists exempting themselves from their own rules. Anthropologists require that their own claims be just as much subject to empirico-rationalist verification as are the claims of believers.

Otherwise, Levenson is more honest than most of his Christian counterparts in enunciating that his agenda is to combine historicalcritical methods with traditional interpretation. He says that "neither tradition nor modernity can credibly dispense with the other. When biblical studies ignores this point, it becomes impoverished and endangers its future."59 However, Levenson not only offers a very contradictory and unsatisfactory solution, but his insistence on merging traditional with modern interpretive methods carries within it the seeds of the destruction of biblical studies in secular academia.

As we noted, Levenson recoils against the idea that the original intent of an author is supreme in the application of the Bible. That is to say, he views most critical scholars as fixated on the idea that the only meaning the Bible should have is what its original authors intended. Any effort to understand the composition and meaning of a biblical text in its original context must be balanced by "the need to put the text back together in a way that makes it available in the present and in its entirety-not merely in the past and in the form of historically contextualized fragments .1160

One of Levenson's main claims is that "room must be made for other senses of the text, developed by other traditions."6' If so, we must remember to distinguish two different generators of these "senses" to which Levenson refers: (1) senses generated by the original author and (2) senses generated by readers. Levenson clearly wants to establish the legitimacy of the second option, wherein readers, especially in the form of faith communities, can generate a sense that was not intended by the original author.

Levenson's plea is not new. As he himself admits, it is a variant of the famous distinctions made by Krister Stendahl, the former dean of the Harvard Divinity School. In a much-cited article in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Stendahl argued that scholars should distinguish "what it meant and what it means."62 The background of such a claim was Stendahl's realization that the Bible is so alien to our culture that only reinterpretation could keep it alive. Note Stendahl's own remarks,

> This understanding leads to the puzzling insight that in the living religious traditions continuity is affirmed and achieved by discontinuity. Authority is affirmed and relevance asserted by reinterpretation.63

As does Levenson, Stendahl claimed that reinterpretation, even when it means disregarding the "original" sense of a text, was a sort of "essential" function of scriptures, as evidenced by this statement:

> From a historical point of view, Paul did not mean what Augustine heard him say.... For better or for worse that is how Scriptures function, and, if so, we had better take note thereof in our treatment of the history of ideas.64

For Stendahl, it is scripture's nature to be reinterpreted. Stendahl echoed the ideas of Hans-Georg Gadamer, who asserted that readers always recreate meaning to the extent that it does not much matter what an author meant.65

In essence, Levenson champions the legitimacy of "recontextualization" and "reappropriation," which claims that a text can and should mean whatever a faith community needs it to mean to keep the community alive. For Levenson, recontextualization is legitimate even when it might contradict what an author originally meant. And both Levenson and Stendahl argue that since faith communities do apply other meanings to the Bible, it is legitimate for them to do so. This rationale may be expressed more schematically as: "People do X = People ought to be allowed to do X."

Upon closer inspection, Levenson's argument (and that of Stendahl) is seriously flawed. First, it relies on relativism, which Levenson denounces elsewhere. If senses other than the original are to be allowed, then why argue against any of those other senses at all? Similarly, Levenson's own grievance against the monopolism of the historicalcritical method is self-refuting: If a monopolistic approach is illegitimate, then his own idea would form yet another monopolistic position. After all, pluralism of meaning becomes a monopolistic position if pluralism of meaning is the only position allowed. Indeed, all Levenson is arguing is that his monopolistic approach should be the only legitimate one.

Another flaw is that his allowance of senses other than the original one would render superfluous his own warnings not to misunderstand him. For example, he says, "My point would be misunderstood if it were taken to be that only a religious affirmation can justify the presence of biblical studies in a curriculum."66 But what if two hundred years from now, someone makes

Levenson's own book into some sort of scripture that recontextualizes his words to mean exactly the opposite of what he says he wants readers to understand? Would he allow "room for other senses" to his own work, especially if such senses were the complete opposite of what he intended? Would he argue that since people do engage in such reinterpretations all the time, it is therefore proper for them to treat his work that way? I suspect he would find that unethical, and so the same applies to any recontextualization of the sort he allows to faith communities.

As previously observed, Levenson's own reappropriation program carries the seeds of the destruction of biblical studies. When considering the meaning of a biblical text for faith communities, two positions can be identified for those who believe there is even such a thing as authorial intent:

A. Authorial intent is the only one that matters

B. Authorial intent is not the only one that matters

If one chooses A, then biblical studies has been highly unsuccessful. We often do not possess enough information to determine what an author meant, even if we believe that authorial intent matters and should be the primary goal of interpretation.

If one chooses B, then the only result is chaos and relativism that renders scholarly biblical studies moot and superfluous. Faith communities do not need academic biblical scholars to inform them about any original context in order to keep the Bible alive for themselves. So what is the purpose of academic biblical studies in such a case? The answer is that there is no purpose, except perhaps to preserve the employment and status of biblical scholars.

All this is particularly problematic because Levenson misidentifies the nature of the claims that readers sometimes make. What Levenson regards as a recontextualization is often not regarded as such by members of faith com munities. Indeed, the very notion of "recontextualiztion," and his supposed rejection of "fundamentalism," expresses precisely the type of outside observation by academic biblical scholars that he otherwise denounces.67

It is not usually the case that a modern faith community acknowledges that

Text A has original meaning B, but that meaning B will be disregarded or contradicted so that Text A can take on modern meaning C. Rather, most members of faith communities assert that Text A means C, but not because it is recontextualized. For them, B = C. Academic scholars might call that "recontextualization" because they have concluded on empirico-rationalist grounds that the meaning attributed to a text by faith communities today is not original, even when faith communities might be claiming not a reinterpretation but rather a continuity in interpretation.

But once an equation is made between a modern sense and an original sense, it is not a case of scholars allowing "another sense" but rather a case where simple empirico-rationalism comes into play. As such, a secular biblical scholar is perfectly right in concluding that a modern community is falsely claiming that "the modern sense = the original author's sense." Followers of the historicalcritical method would be no more monopolistic or fundamentalistic in this case than if they were correcting someone who claimed that 1 = 3.

Even if we suppose that all authorial intention is irrelevant or indeterminate, Levenson's position would also lead to the argument that biblical studies should end.68 The consequences of Levenson's position differs not in the least from ejecting that ancient text from modern life altogether. If Text A can mean both B and Not-B, then how is Not-B any different from regarding meaning B as irrelevant in modern life? And how does regarding meaning B as irrelevant in modern life differ from simply ejecting Text A and its meaning B from modern life altogether? More importantly, why are we expending any energy in determining the history or original meaning of a text in the first place?

On a more practical level, we see the problems Levenson's inconcinnities cause when we examine his comparison of the use of scripture by AngloIsraelites with the use of scripture by Martin Luther King. Briefly, AngloIsraelites believe that the true Israelites were Aryan and British, and that their kin are their descendants.69 In contrast, those known today as "Jews" are considered to be counterfeits, or the result of some genealogical corruption. Levenson uses this quote as his illustration of AngloIsraelism's claims:

> Originally the Jews had been a blond people very similar to the modern Anglo-Saxons. After the crucifixion of Christ, according to one exegete, the physiognomy of the Jews had greatly altered for the worse ... But the

> Jews who were members of the ten tribes retained their blondness and their beauty. The Anglo-Saxons were the true Jews, God's chosen people.70

Levenson sees such an AngloIsraelite "reappropriation" as illegitimate because they "rewrote history so as to project themselves into the paradigmatic past."71

In contrast, Levenson approves of how Martin Luther King used scripture in his last speech on April 3, 1968, a portion of which Levenson quotes as follows:

> Ijust want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain, and I have looked over, and I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land.72

Levenson claims that one difference rests on motive. Dr. King "identified with Israel in its suffering and not just in its triumph. His words do not seek to claim a superior status for his own people but rather greater understanding of their affliction."73

But Levenson never explains why identifying with Israel "in its suffering" should be privileged over identifying with Israel only in its triumph. Who made up the rule that only suffering and humble reappropriations/identifications should be deemed legitimate? Why not argue that any identification that purports to be historically true is illegitimate when it cannot produce verifiable evidence? That is to say, the AngloIsraelite claim is illegitimate precisely because it asserts that A = B (where A = Biblical Israelites and B = Modern British).

If so, then motive has little to do with the legitimacy of an identification. The AngloIsraelites are simply making a historical claim, while Martin Luther King is simply making an analogical and metaphorical claim ("we are like Israelites" versus "we are Israelites"), as Levenson himself observes. The historical claim is subject to good, old-fashioned empirico-rationalist verification or falsification, while an analogy can be allowed some artistic license.

And Levenson's complaints about AngloIsraelism's flawed historical identification contradict his own claim that the original sense should not be privileged. If so, then why not let the AngloIsraelites go on thinking that they are

the true Israel just like many other Christians believe that they are the true Israel? This is a very Christian notion, if one reads Romans:

> But it is not as though the word of God had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his descendants; but "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as descendants. (Romans 9:6-8)

If so, then AngloIsraelite claims don't seem any more far-fetched than those of the author of Romans.

Furthermore, the comparison is unfair because it seeks to represent the basis for AngloIsraelism's identification with ancient Israel through a secondary source, which does not represent the argumentation, flawed as it may be, that led to that conclusion.74 If one looks at the argument of Edward Hine, a wellknown AngloIsraelite, he quotes Isaiah 3:9, which says in the King James Version: "The show of their countenance doth witness against them."75 Hine combines this statement with a wellknown biblical tradition of people's appearance changing because of sin or a curse. He therefore concludes that the Jews must have experienced a similar change of appearance as punishment for Christ's crucifixion.

In fact, one could argue that Hine's exegesis represents a variant of longhonored Jewish interpretive traditions involving changes of physical appearance. There are many biblical characters who are said to have experienced a sudden change of physical appearance, including color, both in the Bible and in postbiblical Jewish interpretation. For example, Miriam turned "white as snow" as punishment for speaking against Moses in Numbers 12:10.

According to numerous Jewish, Christian, and Islamic interpreters, the so-called curse of Ham, derived from an interpretation of Genesis 9:22-27, involved Ham turning black.76 We find reference to that curse in Jewish medical treatises produced contemporaneously with AngloIsraelite works. Thus, Julius Preuss, one of the most distinguished historians of Jewish medicine, said that "Ham became black (negro)."77 There is a far older tradition that involves turning idolaters into apes, which is found in Islamic and Talmudic sources.78

And the whole tradition of AngloIsraelism is long and deep enough that some historians of Handel's music argue that to understand the music one "cannot fail to notice both that the preachers habitually identify modern Britain with ancient Israel and that they make recurrent specific parallels which bear on the subjects of the librettos."79 So why is that interpretive tradition and its corresponding faith community not viewed as expressing another allowable sense?

We can, of course, just as easily find a quote of Martin Luther King that rewrites history. For example, Martin Luther King interpreted Jesus as having a "love ethic" despite Luke 14:26, in which Jesus enjoins disciples to hate their parents.80 If Jesus preached hate, then it is rewriting history to say he had a "love ethic." And AngloIsraelites, after all, have not rewritten history any more than the Christianity upon which Martin Luther King depends.

Christianity sees Christ as present throughout the Hebrew Bible. When Christians identify the New Testament Christ literally with the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 or with one of the entities mentioned in Genesis 1:26 ("let us make man"), why do those identifications not constitute a rewriting of history in the same way as AngloIsraelites saying that their ancestors are also present in the Hebrew Bible?

Another difference made by Levenson is just as facile. Levenson says that Dr. King "does not project his own group into the past; he brings the past, the story of Israel, to bear upon the present."81 Levenson praises King for using Moses as an analogy, while the AngloIsraelite identification with ancient Jews "has already been justly forgotten."82 Again, here is a very nebulous distinction between "projecting a group into the past" versus using an ancient story to "bear upon the present."

AngloIsraelites also see themselves as using ancient stories to bear upon their present condition, which some believe is one of oppression and affliction. Furthermore, I am not sure how AngloIsraelites are less entitled to project their group into the past than Christians who claim that their seed was in Abraham. In short, the legitimacy of reappropriation seems to be applied in an arbitrary manner.

John J. Collins, the president of the Society of Biblical Literature in 2002,

once remarked: "The Bible was written long ago and in another culture, vastly different from our own."83 In the end, Levenson's pleas for the legitimacy of recontextualization only expose the fact that the Bible is so foreign to modern life that it can only survive if people pretend that it is something other than it is. The fact that people reappropriate scripture is not an argument that they should do so. Levenson never answers the question of why we should bother to reappropriate such texts at all, given that there are many other texts whose voices are still silent and silenced by scholars who could resurrect them just as well. Bibliolatry, therefore, still binds Levenson to his Protestant counterparts Stendahl, Eichrodt, and Brueggemann.

FEMINIST THEOLOGIES

Men have written most of influential biblical "theologies" just as men have written most of the classic works in biblical studies. Nonetheless, women have written substantive works on biblical studies since at least the late nineteenth century. Such works came in a surge of activity by women who became interested in the study of religion. This is the period of Madame Blavatsky (1831-1891), who inaugurated Theosophy, an archetype of New Age traditions, in books such as Isis Unveiled (1877).84

In biblical studies, a main outcome of this activity was The Woman's Bible (1895), edited by the prominent feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), who collaborated with Susan B. Anthony, the famous American feminist.85 The Woman's Bible had an all-star committee that included Matilda Joslyn Gage, Mrs. Robert Ingersoll, Lillie Devereux Blake, and Sarah Underwood. The Woman's Bible was a great advance in biblical studies insofar as it sought to unmask the ways in which biblical male authors sought to justify their treatment of women by appealing to a command from God.

The novelty and challenge to previous androcentric biblical scholarship can be witnessed already in The Woman's Bible section on Genesis. The commentators did not flinch from declaring at least parts of the Bible to be pious frauds meant to benefit men. Commenting on what is now regarded as a second creation story that begins in Genesis 2:4b, The Woman's Bible says: "My own opinion is that the second story was manipulated by some Jew, in an endeavor to give `heavenly authority' for requiring a woman to obey the man she married."86

The second creation story, of course, contains a famous curse in Genesis 3:16: "To the woman he said, `I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'" The curse was uttered by Yahweh against the woman as punishment for her succumbing to the temptation of eating the forbidden fruit. Commenting on this "curse," The Woman's Bible says: "The curse pronounced on woman is inserted in an unfriendly spirit to justify her degradation and subjection to man."87

The Woman's Bible was also very acute in observing how often men arbitrarily selected passages that benefited them while omitting those that they thought were irrelevant. Again, in the case of the curse of Yahweh on Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, the feminist commentator complains that men never preach about pulling weeds, which is another of the curses imposed on men. Rather male preachers emphasize the subservience of women to men.

Throughout The Woman's Bible there is an assumption that many biblical teachings should remain in the past, or that they were misapplied by males. When we look at how modern feminist theologians compare to The Woman's Bible, we find that much has changed in terms of the increased participation by women scholars. We have seen the publication of A Feminist Companion to the Bible, edited principally by Athalya Brenner, and The Women's Bible Commentary, edited by Carole A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe.88 Susanne Scholz has alerted us to how male translators have mitigated, through translation, some of the more misogynistic treatments of women in the Bible.89 Yet all this represents quantitative extensions and refinements of what The Woman's Bible had already done.90

And more often we see a qualitative step back. Indeed, prominent feminist theologians and biblical scholars are still focused on redeeming the Bible and maintaining its relevance in the modern world. A case in point is the work of Phyllis Trible, who has authored a number of very influential works, including Texts of Terror (1978) and God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality (1984).91 Trible spent much of her academic career at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, and she served as president of the Society of Biblical Literature in 1994.

One of Trible's main arguments has been that male interpreters have suppressed readings more friendly toward women in the Bible. That is to say, the

Bible is often more gender inclusive than male interpreters have indicated. In particular, she has proposed that Adam was viewed by the biblical author as an androgyne or sexless creature.92 This has, indeed, drawn fire not only from male interpreters, but also from some female interpreters.93 If, as Trible believes, "Adam" becomes a "man" (Hebrew w)K, pronounced 'ish) after the creation of Eve, then it leaves unexplained why the biblical author says that the woman was taken "from the man" (Hebrew: w>Hn) in Genesis 2:23. The latter statement presupposes that the entity from which she was taken was male.94

As to the curse on the woman in Genesis 3:16 ("man shall rule over you"), Trible tells us that "[h]er subordination is neither divine decree nor the female destiny. God describes the consequence but does not prescribe it as punishment."95 This is a most curious statement, as any statement of the type "You shall be/do X" is, by definition, a "divine decree" when uttered by a god, such as Yahweh. And the whole idea that subordination is a "consequence" flounders on the observation that it is Yahweh who can make and unmake "consequences." Thus, Trible's exegesis becomes a more sophisticated form of biblical apologetics.

Sometimes she claims accomplishments for biblical women on very dubious grounds. For example, concerning Hagar, Trible claims that "[w]ithin the historical memories of Israel, she is the first woman to bear a child."96 But she, herself, notes that to claim this achievement for Hagar she must exclude Genesis 1-11.97 And even if she excludes those chapters, it is not at all certain why she privileges those memories of Hagar to be any more "historical" than anything else in Genesis 1-11.

Trible does not, of course, represent all feminists. Other feminists have criticized Trible. Renita Weems, among others, sees white feminists as sometimes being just as hegemonic as white males.98 And there are some feminists who see the Bible as irredeemably patriarchal. Pamela Milne, for example, remarks, "[I]t is time we began to look much more honestly and directly at what it means to call apparently non-reformable patriarchal texts like the story of Adam and Eve `sacred.'"99

One can sense that at the completion of The Woman's Bible at least some women biblical scholars were ready to declare the Bible useless for defining women's roles in the modern world. In general, liberationists can never seem to

fathom that liberation might entail ending their own employment. Instead of seeking liberation from the use of any text to direct our actions toward women or toward any other human being, most modern feminist critical scholars seek to maintain the life of the source of their own employment. As such, feminist biblical scholars and male biblical scholars share the yoke of bibliolatry just the same.

LIBERATION THEOLOGIES

Since our thesis is that biblical theology provides nothing useful for modern human beings, we must address the challenge posed by a subset of biblical theologies known as liberation theologies. Liberation theologies, in actuality, need not always appeal only to the biblical text. Yet many of them do purport to provide practical application of the Bible in order to help modern human beings counter oppression. There are now numerous liberation theologies and their related "post-colonial" versions that suit various ethnic or underempowered groups.'00 Here, we address mainly Latin American and US Latino/a theologies.

Historically, the definitive birth of liberation theology is usually placed at the second meeting of the Council of Latin American Bishops (CELAM; Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano) in Medellin, Colombia, in 1968.10' Document on Peace, the report issued by CELAM at that meeting, contained the basic premises of what came to be known as liberation theology. In general, liberation theology centers on "praxis," or actual practice, rather than on orthodoxy. Theology should be generated by and for the poor and oppressed instead of dictated from the upper echelons of ecclesiastical institutions.

The primary figure behind liberation theology is Gustavo Gutierrez (1928-), a Peruvian Catholic theologian who elaborated his views in A Theology of Liberation (1971), which contains at least four elements that have been subsequently adopted in some form by other liberation theologians: (1) a redefinition of theology as "critical reflection" rather than as the traditional focus on abstract ideas that have little social relevance; (2) "liberation" from oppression and poverty as a central goal; (3) the use of Marxist analysis to explain how poverty in Latin America is due to economic dependence promoted by industrialized countries; and (4) the insistence that the Church combat poverty through political means.102

During the 1970s, liberation theology transitioned from a theology for the poor into a theology from the poor. This shift was expedited by Base Ecclesial Communities, groups originally created to help educate laypersons in Catholicism in places where there was a shortage of priests. Laypersons could perform some educational functions themselves. By the 1970s, however, these communities, populated by many poverty-stricken individuals, began to assert that the poor should formulate theology rather than receive theology from upper echelons. Some of the most thoroughly Marxist approaches were also published during this decade, notably Jose Miranda's Marx and the Bible, which noted that early Christianity favored communistic lifestyles (e.g., Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-35).'03 The various phases and reactions from the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and more conservative streams of Protestantism need not detain us here.

For our purposes, we can show that despite their differences with traditional theologies, liberation theologies are beset by similar, arbitrary, or poor readings of the biblical text. To illustrate our point, let us consider the prevalent use in liberation theologies of the biblical prophets as the paradigms of liberationist messages, particularly among Latin American and US Latino theologians. 104

The use of the prophets is advertised in the titles of a number of books, such as Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church by Ada Maria IsasiDiaz and Yolanda Tarango or Prophesy Deliverance by Cornel West."' We have commentaries from a liberation theology perspective, as is the case with Carol J. Dempsey's The Prophets: A Liberation-Critical Reading (2000).106 There are also more extended articulations, such as the one by Guillermo Melendez, who states:

> We have chosen to call this church born from the people `prophetic' because this model recovers the biblical tradition of the prophets' cry for justice for the downtrodden and their trust in God's requirement that the covenant community care especially for the poor.... This model of the Church is prophetic also because it looks to God's promise of a `future and a hope' (Jeremiah 29:11) and the people's call to participate in establishing God's reign of justice, mercy, and peace.' 07

Similarly, another theologian describes his approach to the Bible as follows:

> Such an entree to the liberating power of the Bible calls for a specific

> way of reading the Bible ... a prophetic reading from the perspective of the oppressed that reappropriates the basic story of the Bible, vis-a-vis a royal reading from the position of imperial authority that obfuscates and distorts the basic story ...108

Francisco O. Garcia-Treto is among the few Latino biblical scholars who has pointed out the flaws of applying the prophets to modern liberationist readings. He says: "As I have suggested, a monologic reading of the Bible is neither the only nor best one possible, and the assumption that the prophetic paradigm of communication is the only one present in the biblical text is likewise flawed and limiting."109

If one inspects the stated values of most of these Hispanic theologians, one finds at least three commonalities: (1) A valuing of multiracial/multiethnic identities; (2) acceptance and celebration of the mixture of Christian and indigenous religious traditions; and (3) claimed opposition to imperialistic hegemonies.10 But upon closer inspection, one can show that the biblical prophets, who were opposed to all of these major features, could be seen as themselves agents of imperialism.

If one looks for biblical figures who valued multiculturalism, one will find that it was certainly not the prophets. Rather, it was the kings who were often labeled as "evil" or otherwise chastised for their multiculturalism."' Solomon is one example discussed in 1 Kings 11:1-6:

> King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the Israelites, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you; for they will surely incline your heart to follow their gods"; Solomon clung to these in love. Among his wives were seven hundred princesses and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon followed Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not completely follow the LORD, as his father David had done.

Later, we are told of Josiah, who was regarded as good because he destroyed the religious pluralism that Solomon advocated:

> The king [Josiah] defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, to the south of the Mount of Destruction, which King Solomon of Israel had built for Astarte the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. (2 Kings 23:13)

Similarly, Ahab, regarded as perhaps the most evil king of all ancient Israel, was famed for his ethnic and religious pluralism:

> Ahab son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him. And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, he took as his wife Jezebel daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. Ahab also made a sacred pole. Ahab did more to provoke the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than had all the kings of Israel who were before him. (1 Kings 16:30-33)

Most of the prophets were definitely against any sort of ethnic and religious pluralism. Ezekiel 44:22, for instance, says that a priest "shall not marry a widow, or a divorced woman, but only a virgin of the stock of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest." Jeremiah 11:13 laments: "For your gods have become as many as your cities, 0 Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to shame, altars to make offerings to Baal." Elijah goes so far as to advocate the murder of the priests of the god Baal (1 Kings 18:40).

Despite such biblical examples of intolerance, we find liberation theolo gians who seem oblivious to how the prophetic messages could be seen to promote injustice toward other ethnic groups and religions. Gustavo Gutierrez, a founding father of liberation theology, in fact, says: "The prophets announce a reign of peace. But peace presupposes the establishment of justice: The product of justice shall be peace, and the fruit of equity, perpetual security (Isaiah 32:17; cf. also Psalm 85)."h12

Overall, the appeal to the prophets as champions of justice rests on the most politically naive readings of these books. To understand this problem, let us consider two statements about the government response to Hurricane Katrina, which struck New Orleans on August 29, 2005.

> Statement 1:
>
> Our priorities are clear: We will complete the evacuation as quickly and safely as possible. We will not let criminals prey on the vulnerable, and we will not allow bureaucracy to get in the way of saving lives. 13
>
> Statement 2:
>
> We have been fighting for assistance to spur the Gulf Coast's economy and get help to those in need. But too many in Washington have stood in the way.14

From just reading the text, one could infer that these are critics of the government and champions of the people of New Orleans. Statement 1 promises help and seems to criticize the bureaucracy. Statement 2 also speaks about efforts to assist, and speaks about many in Washington standing in the way.

Yet both statements are by Washington insiders and bureaucrats. Statement 1 is by President George W. Bush, and Statement 2 is by Senator John F. Kerry, the Democratic opponent of President Bush in the 2004 election. If one reads enough of these political statements, one learns that each side will accuse the other of injustice, mismanagement, theft, lying, and so on. That is normal political rhetoric, in which the truth of the accusation is not always so obvious.

Likewise, it is absurd to accept uncritically the accusations of the prophets against the kings. The prophets may not always be correct, and we don't have any responses from supposedly evil kings. These prophets, if they were literate, were already probably part of the elite, and they often showed themselves to be lackeys of imperialists such as Cyrus of Nebuchadnezzar. Any prophetic accusations or championing of the downtrodden cannot be taken at face value any more than the rhetoric and characterizations that flow every day from Republicans against Democrats, and vice versa. 115

Although most liberation theologians see themselves as fighting against Eurocentric perspectives on the Bible, the use of the prophets as a paradigm of liberation continues a very Eurocentric tradition. Such a tradition is exemplified in the views of Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), the German scholar widely regarded as a principal synthesizer of modern critical scholarship. Wellhausen himself observed: "It was Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah who introduced a movement against the old popular worship of the high places; in doing so they are not in the least actuated by a deep-rooted preference for the temple of Jerusalem, but by ethical motives." 116

Likewise, William G. Dever, who, as a critic of multiculturalism and a defender of the "western cultural tradition," would appear to have no commonalities with Latin American liberationists, shares a bibliolatrous respect for the prophets when he exclaims:

> But the portentous historical situation and the real life theological crises of the Assyrian and Babylonian era produced an eloquent call for reform-for social justice-that is found nowhere else in the literature of the ancient Near East. In that sense, the prophets, were indeed "inspired," and their message remains vital today."7

And for all the proclamations against imperialism, liberation theologians seem blissfully oblivious to the brutal imperialism endorsed, accepted, or promoted by many prophets. 18 Consider this example from Isaiah, the very prophet cited by Gutierrez as a promoter of liberation:

> Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him and strip kings of their robes, to open doors before him and the gates shall not be closed: I will go before you and level the mountains, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. (Isaiah 45:1-3)

It is clear that Yahweh endorses Cyrus's empire. People should be his slaves. Cyrus, the Persian king, becomes even a messiah figure. The thought is not of liberation. Consider also this example in Jeremiah:

> Now I have given all these lands into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him even the wild animals of the field to serve him. All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave. But if any nation or kingdom will not serve this king, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, then I will punish that nation with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, says the LORD, until I have completed its destruction by his hand. (Jeremiah 27:6-8)

Far from advocating liberation from the Babylonian empire, the prophet Jeremiah says that it is Yahweh's will that all people be servants of Nebuchadnezzar. There is no thought of liberation here. It is just the opposite. Imperialism and servitude are part of God's plan. Jeremiah is Nebuchadnezzar's lackey, not some courageous foe of an imperialist.

But perhaps most important of all, these liberationist theologians miss the fact that Yahweh himself is the ultimate imperialist in the books of the prophets. In fact, this is a feature common to all monotheistic religions because they suppose the existence of one god who created the world and therefore owns it. These prophets actively celebrate Yahweh's empire, as is clear in Isaiah:

> It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:2-4)

Liberation theologians seem quite naive about the nature of "peace" envisioned by these prophets. As I have noted elsewhere, the Hebrew "shalom," usually translated "peace," can be viewed as a thoroughly imperialistic term.' 19 As used in the Hebrew Bible, it really refers to a state of affairs favorable to

Yahweh. Peace means no more war only insofar as Yahweh has destroyed his opponents or he has successfully beaten them into utter submission. Note this example from Isaiah:

> But the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land; and aliens will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob. And the peoples will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them in the LORD's land as male and female slaves; they will take captive those who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them. (Isaiah 14:1-2)

To be fair, many of these liberation theologians might argue that "prophetic" is a metaphor or that they have simply recontextualized the prophets. Yet such recontextualization is as meaningless as using other promoters of imperialism or opponents of multiculturalism as paradigms of the opposite. No one thinks of using Nazi literature as a paradigm of liberation, and with good reason. And just as liberation theologians are prepared to repudiate Nazi literature completely for its genocidal and imperialist thoughts, liberation theologians should be willing to repudiate completely a prophetic literature that endorses genocide and Yahwistic imperialism.

SUMMARY

Despite the claims of academic rigor and increasing self-criticism, all biblical theologies have one thing in common: bibliolatry. They may not agree on what the central concept of the Bible is or how many concepts there are, but they all agree that the Bible is valuable enough to have its concepts receive exhaustive analysis for the purpose of helping readers. Never is there an Old Testament or biblical theology centered on completely deprivileging the biblical text and on helping move human beings beyond its antiquated, opprobrious sections. Instead, biblical theologians endeavor to rescue the Bible from itself, while providing the illusion that biblical theology should matter. Such an attitude serves to maintain the employment of biblical theologians. If this is the best biblical theology has to offer, then it deserves to come to a most ignominious end.

NOTES

1. John J. Collins, Encounters with Biblical Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), p. 11.

2. Leo Perdue, Reconstructing Old Testament Theology after the Collapse of History (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), p. 11.

3. For basic historical surveys, see John H. Hayes and Frederick C. Prussner, Old Testament Theology: Its History and Development (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985). Also useful is Robert B. Laurin, ed., Contemporary Old Testament Theologians (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1970).

4. On Reformation theologians, see the older but useful Emil G. Kraeling, The Old Testament Since the Reformation (New York: Schocken, 1969).

5. Gabler's Latin address (De justo discriminae theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus) may be found in a condensed English translation in John H. Sandys-Wunsch and Laurence Eldredge, "J. P. Gabler and the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of His Originality," Scottish Journal of Theology 33 (1980): 133-58.

6. For the discussion of Gabler, I am also indebted to Walter Brueggemann, Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), pp. 13-15; Hayes and Prussner, Old Testament Theology, pp. 2-5.

7. James Barr, The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), p. 27.

8. Ludwig Kohler, Old Testament Theology, trans. A. S. Todd (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957).

9. Theodorus Christiaan Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970).

10. Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

11. Brevard Childs, Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context (London: SCM, 1985).

12. Barr, The Concept of Biblical Theology, p. 31. See also Norman K. Gottwald, "W. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament," in Laurin, Contemporary Old Testament Theologians, pp. 25-62.

13. Walther Eichrodt, The Theology of the Old Testament, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 1:25. In German, 1:1, "ein Gesamtbild der alttestamentlichen Glaubenswelt zu gewinnen." As is the case in this note, I will cite the English translation first, followed by "German" to indicate the German original after the slash. Since all quotes are actually from the first volume, the German original follows Walther Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments: Teil 1, Gott and Volk (Stuttgart: Ehrenfried Klotz/Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957).

14. Eichrodt, The Theology of the Old Testament, 1:36. In German, 1:9, "Indessen lasst rich in allen Quellen trotz ihrer teilweise recht fragmentarischen Gestalt der Bundesschluss zwischen Jahve and Israel als ursprunglicher Bestandteil nachweisen."

15. Ibid., 1:38. In German, 1:10, "eine Atmosphere des Vertrauens and der Sicherheit ensteht, in der man die Kraft zur willigen Hingabe an den Gotteswillen wie den frohlichen Mut zu Anfassen des Lebens findet." Italics are Eichrodt's.

16. Ibid., 1:212. In German, 1:135, "Nur der christliche Glaube vermag die Erkenntnis von der Geistigkeit Gottes ohne Schadigung seiner religiosen Unmittelbarkeit zu ertragen, weil er in der Person Jesu sein Zentrum."

17. Ibid., 1:121; In German, 1:69.

18. See also Alberto R. W. Green, The Storm God in the Ancient Near East, Biblical and Judaic Studies 8 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003).

19. For recent treatments of this passage, see Bill T. Arnold and Brent A. Strawn, "[beyah gemo] in Psalm 68:5: A Hebrew Gloss to an Ugaritic Epithet?" ZAW 115, no. 3 (2003): 428-32; Oswald Loretz, "Der ugaritisch-hebraische Parallelismus rkb `rptllrkb b `rbwt in Psalm 68:5," Ugarit-Forschungen 34 (2002): 521-26.

20. Eichrodt, The Theology of the Old Testament, 1:259. In German, 1:168, "gehorte es wohl zu Israels Anteil an der gemeinorientalischen Gottesaufassung, dass als das nachstliegende Motiv des Gotteszorns ein menschliches Vergehen angenommen wurde, ganz einerlei, ob man es zu kennen glaubte oder nicht.

21. Ibid., 1:75. In German, 1:36, "der menschlichen Willkur and Relativierung."

22. Ibid., 1:78. In German, 1:39, "Ein weiterer Behr beachtenswerter Zug des israelitischen Rechts ist die Abschaffung grausamer Brutalitat in der Bestrafung des Schuldigen." Italics are Eichrodt's.

23. Ibid., 1:79. In German, 1:40, "Von einem Sonderrecht des Priesters oder des Vornehmen horen wir nichts."

24. Eichrodt, The Theology of the Old Testament, 1:140/German, 1:83: "So wird auch nirgends von den israelitischen Kriegern eine Schandung der Weiber berichtet."

25. Ibid., 1:205. In German, 1:129, "Fur die Assyrer ist deshalb Jahve der `Gott des Landes Samaria' (2. Kg. 17, 26f; 18, 34f). Von den Israeliten selber wird es dagegen nie in dieser Weise bezeichnet."

26. For a discussion of this inscription, see Ziony Zevit, The Religions ofAncient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Views (New York: Continuum, 2001), pp. 390-91.

27. Eichrodt, The Theology of the Old Testament, 1:223. In German, 1:143, "Jahve hat nie eine weibliche Throngenossin besessen and damit eine Erganzung, die alle semitischen Hauptgotter erfahren haben, von rich abgewehrt."

28. See also William G. Dever, Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and

Folk Religion in Ancient Israel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 162.

29. Ibid., p. 132.

30. Brueggemann, Theology of the Old Testament, p. 117.

31. Ibid., p. 122.

32. Ibid., p. 107.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., p. 4. Italics are Brueggemann's.

35. Ibid., p. 144.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., p. 497.

38. Michael D. Coogan, "The Great Gulf between Scholars and the Pew," in Biblical Studies Alternatively: An Introductory Reader, ed. Susanne Scholz (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), p. 11.

39. Brueggemann, Theology of the Old Testament, p. 193.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., p. 196.

43. Ibid., p. 226.

44. Ibid., p. 227.

45. Ibid.

46. Eugene H. Merrill, review of Theology of the Old Testament, by Walter Brueggemann, BS 157, no. 625 (January-March 2000): 111.

47. Jon D. Levenson, The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), p. 34.

48. Barr, Biblical Theology, p. 294; Levenson, The Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976). For another discussion of Levenson, see Perdue, Reconstructing Old Testament Theology, pp. 183-94 and Collins, Encounters with Biblical Theology, pp. 3-4.

49. Jacob Neusner, Theology Comes Home: The Role of Theology in the Academic Study of Religion and the Role of Theology of Judaism in the Academic Study of Judaism (Annandale-On-Hudson, NY: Department of Religion, Bard College, 2000), p. 21. For an earlier and pessimistic view, see Matitiahu Tsevat, "Theology of the Old Testament," Horizons in Biblical Theology 8 (1986): 33-50.

50. On the criticisms pointing toward the detrimental effects of the historicalcritical method already in nineteenth-century Judaism, see David Engel, "Hebrew Nationalism and Biblical Criticism: The Attitude of Perez Smolenskin," in Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine, ed. R. Chazan, W. W. Hallo, and L. H. Schiffman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), pp. 483-507.

51. Levenson, The Hebrew Bible, p. 30.

52. Ibid., p. 123.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., pp. 114-15; Leszek Kolakowski, Religion: If There Is No God; On God, the Devil, Sin, and Other Worries of the So-Called Philosophy of Religion (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 15-16. Levenson (The Hebrew Bible, p. 178, n. 21) cites this book only by the title Religion.

55. Levenson, The Hebrew Bible, p. 115.

56. Ibid., p. 116. Levenson here quotes with approval a definition found in Leo Strauss, Natural Right and History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. 25.

57. For example, compare Karl Popper, The Poverty of Historicism (New York: Routledge, 2002) with Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, Practicing New Historicism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

58. On these types of issues, see James Lett, Science, Reason, and Anthropology: The Principles of Rational Inquiry (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997).

59. Levenson, The Hebrew Bible, p. xiv.

60. Ibid., p. 79.

61. Ibid., p. 123.

62. Krister Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. George A. Buttrick *et al.* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1:420. Compare Stendahl's view with that of E. D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 8: "Meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence.... Significance, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person ..."

63. Stendahl, "Biblical Studies," in The Study of Religion in Colleges and Universities, ed. Paul Ramsey and John F. Wilson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 31.

64. Ibid. For a brief summary of Stendahl's current views, see Stendahl, "Why I Love the Bible," Harvard Divinity Bulletin 35, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 22-28.

65. Hans-George Gadamer, Truth and Method, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989).

66. Levenson, The Hebrew Bible, p. 124.

67. Levenson (The Hebrew Bible, p. 79) equates fundamentalism with the denial of the process of change and development in the biblical text. But the very judgment that the text has undergone development and change presumes the sort

of outside empirico-rationalist observation that he denies is legitimate when applied to the interpretations or stories of faith communities he favors.

68. For the history and philosophical issues surrounding the concept of "authorship" and authorial intentionality, see Jed Wyrick, The Ascension of Authorship: Attribution and Canon Formation in Jewish, Hellenistic, and Christian Traditions (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Department of Comparative Literature, 2004); Jeff Mitscherling, Tanya DiTommaso, and Aref Nayed, The Author's Intention (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2004).

69. For an excellent history of AngloIsraelism, see Michael Barkun, Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

70. Levenson, The Hebrew Bible, pp. 154, 182, n. 61. Levenson quotes Thomas F. Gossett, Race: The History of an Idea in America (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963), p. 190. Gossett, however, is not an AngloIsraelite; he is a scholar of race.

71. Levenson, The Hebrew Bible, p. 156.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. As noted by Barkun, Religion and the Racist Right, the AngloIsraelite movement had various phases and diverse positions, ranging from philo-Semitic adherents to virulently anti-Jewish ones.

75. See Edward Hine, Identity of the Lost Tribes of Israel with the Anglo-Celto- Saxons (Boring, OR: CPA Book Publisher, 1999), p. 27.

76. See David M. Goldenberg, The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

77. See Julius Preuss, Biblical and Talmudic Medicine, trans. Fred Rosner (London: Jason Aronson, 1993), p. 460.

78. Azad Hamoto, Der Affe in der altorientalischen Kunst (Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995). On the "ape" tradition in Islam, see Sura 2:265 and 7:166, as well as Michael Cook, "Ibn Qutayba and the Monkeys," Studia Islamica 89 (1999): 43-74; Ilse Lichtenstadter, "`And become ye accursed apes,'" Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 14 (1991): 162-75. For how these traditions were reinterpreted in Nazi literature, see Hector Avalos, Fighting Words: The Origins of Religious Violence (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2005), pp. 309-10.

79. See Ruth Smith, Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 219-20.

80. Martin Luther King Jr., "Pilgrimage to Non-Violence," in Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History, ed. Staughton Lynd and Alice Lynd (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), p. 214.

81. Levenson, The Hebrew Bible, p. 157.

82. Ibid., p. 157.

83. John J. Collins, Encounters with Biblical Theology (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), p. 7.

84. For a recent reprint, see Helena P. Blavatsky, Isis Unveiled, 2 vols. (Wheaton, IL: Quest, 2000).

85. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, ed., The Woman's Bible (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993).

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87. Ibid., p. 25.

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89. Susanne Scholz, Rape Plots: A Feminist Cultural Study of Genesis 34 (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).

90. For a recent overview of feminist biblical studies, see Joseph Abraham, Eve: Accused or Acquitted? A Reconsideration of Feminist Readings of the Creation Narrative Texts in Genesis 1-3 (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2002).

91. Phyllis Trible, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); Trible, Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

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93. For example, Susan S. Lanser, "(Feminist) Criticism in the Garden: Infer ring Genesis 2-3," Semeia 41 (1988): 67-84; John W. Miller, "Depatriarchalizing God in Biblical Interpretation," CBQ 48 (1986): 609-16.

94. For these and other criticisms, see Robert Kawashima, "A Revisionist Reading Revisited: On the Creation of Adam and Eve," VT 56, no. 1 (2006): 46-57; and Lanser, "(Feminist) Criticism," p. 72.

95. Trible, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality, p. 128.

96. Trible, Texts of Terror, p. 28.

97. Ibid., p. 35, n. 79. Trible says, "By Historical memories, I mean to exclude Genesis 1-11."

98. For example, Renita J. Weems, Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible (San Diego: LuraMedia, 1988).

99. Pamela J. Milne, "Eve & Adam: Is a Feminist Reading Possible?" BR 4, no. 3 (1988): 39.

100. See, for example, Stephen D. Moore, and Fernando F. Segovia, eds., Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections (London: T&T Clark, 2005).

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108. Fernando F. Segovia, "Hispanic American Theology and the Bible," in We Are a People! Initiatives in Hispanic American Theology, ed. Roberto S. Goizueta (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), p. 48.

109. Francisco O. Garcia-Treto, "The Lesson of the Gibeonites," in Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise, ed. Ada Maria IsasiDiaz and Fernando F. Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), p. 84.

110. Miguel De La Torre and Edwin David Aponte (Introducing Latino/a Theologies [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001], p. 55) state: "The Hispanic comunidad is mestizo (multiracial)." Andres Guerrero (A Chicano Theology

[Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987], p. 153) states: "All theology in order to be Christian has to be nonracist; otherwise it is not Christian theology."

111. For a general study of evil in Kings, see Winfried Thiel, "Evil in the Book of Kings," in The Problem of Evil and Its Symbols in Jewish and Christian Tradition, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman, JSOTSup 366 (London: T & T Clark, 2004), pp. 2-13.

112. Gustavo Gutierrez, Teologia de la liberacion: Perspectivas (Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 1987), p. 224: "Los profetas anuncian un reino de paz. Pero la paz supone el establecimiento de la justicia; `El producto de las justicia sera la paz, el fruto de la equidad, una seguridad perpetua (Is 32, 17; cf. tambien Sal 85)." My translation.

113. Speech by President George W. Bush, September 3, 2005, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/09/20050903.html (accessed September 18, 2006).

114. John Kerry, "Kerry on Katrina Anniversary: One Year Later, Miles to Go," http://kerry.senate.gov/v3/press/record.cfm?id=262169&& (accessed September 18, 2006).

115. See also David Marcus, From Balaam to Jonah: Anti-prophetic Satire in the Hebrew Bible (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995).

116. Julius Wellhausen, Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1983), p. 47. Italicized emphasis mine. For comments on how the prophets are being used by today's Euroamerican Evangelical Christians, see Paul Marshall, "The Problem with Prophets," Christianity Today 50, no. 9 (September 2006): 90-94.

117. William G. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 285. For his recent defense of the "western cultural traditon," see Dever, "The Western Cultural Tradition Is at Risk," BAR 32, no. 2 (March/April, 2006): 26, 76. Dever also lumps "multiculturalism" with postmodernism in Dever, "Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey," BAR 26, no. 2 (March/April 2000): 28.

118. For similar criticisms of liberation theology, see Levenson, The Hebrew Bible, pp. 127-59.

119. Avalos, Fighting Words, pp. 169-70.

Part 2

The Infrastructure of Biblical Studies

iblical scholars are supported by institutions and organizations. These entities form an infrastructure that facilitates the funding and distribution of the work of biblical scholars. In this section, we explore the role of academia, professional organizations, and the media-publishing industry in encouraging and promoting the view that the Bible is of sufficient value in our culture that its study should be subsidized and appreciated.

Chapter 7

ACADEMIA: RELIGIONISM BY DEGREES

Ot histories of American academia begin with the Puritans of Massachusetts who established Harvard College in 1636. The motives for the establishment of Harvard are made clear in a promotional pamphlet attributed to Henry Dunster, the first president of the institution, who explained that his community wanted to create the college "to advance learning ... dreading to leave an illiterate Ministery to the Churches, when our present Ministers shall lie in the dust."'

Most historians of higher education agree that the general trajectory since then has been toward the secularization of higher education. Written from a Protestant perspective, George M. Marsden's The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief (1994) charts some of the secularizing trends.' Likewise, James Tunstead Burtchaell, writing from a Catholic perspective, documented in detail how many religious colleges had been secularized.; Both Marsden and Burtchaell wrote these works as lamentations rather than as celebrations.

One American figure who advocated an early trend toward secularization of higher education was the third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson. In a radical departure from earlier American colleges, Thomas Jefferson affirmed that theology would not be taught in his university. In a letter dated November 22, 1822, Jefferson told his friend Thomas Cooper that "[i]n our university ... there is no Professorship of Divinity. A handle has been made of this, to disseminate an idea that this is an institution, not merely of no religion, but against all religion."4

Jefferson actually permitted sects to fund their own professorships, and professors were housed near enough so that students could attend their lectures. However, Jefferson insisted that these professorships should "maintain their independence of us and of each other."5 His agenda in having these sectarian professorships interact with students at the University of Virginia was, in part, "to neutralize their prejudices, and make the general religion a religion of peace, reason, and morality."6

In this chapter, we detail some specific examples of how a supposedly secularized academia still supports a religionist agenda, even in greatly weakened form. Most biblical scholars in academia are still ministers or believers with specific denominational affiliations. Most religious studies programs in public institutions espouse a liberal or pluralistic approach to religion that frowns on criticism of religion as a whole. Even more resisted is the criticism of specific religious traditions, except perhaps for "fundamentalism," which has been replaced by liberal religionist orthodoxy.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY RATIONALES

Two contradictory rationales have been voiced for the study of the Bible in higher education: (1) Decreasing interest in the study of the Bible must be reversed; and (2) Increasing interest in the study of the Bible necessitates meeting the demand. The first rationale can be found already in 1903, when Herbert Horwill published an article on "The Bible in Public Schools," in the revered Atlantic Monthly. He cited a report of the National Educational Association, which indicated that "familiarity with the English Bible as a masterpiece of literature is rapidly decreasing among the pupils in our schools."'

In 1946, John W. Nason spoke about "a gradual decline in the importance of religion in education," which he traced to the late nineteenth century.' Nason was part of a group of faculty sponsored by the National Council on Religion in Higher Education and the American Council on Education, who were trying to identify the reasons for this decline. Nason stated that "science has replaced religion as the source upon which good, evil, and human destiny depend."9 He reported that the faculty had become hostile or indifferent to religion.

On the demand side of the argument was Cyril Harris, an Episcopal pastor at Cornell University. In his book The Religion of Undergraduates (1925), Harris acknowledged that college students may be less "church-conscious" than their parents, but he insisted that "the youth of our day want God," and he advised that universities take an active part in meeting the demand.10 Clarence Prouty Shedd, a professor of "Christian Methods" at Yale University, noted in 1941 that "[n]ot in the last two decades has there been so much concern among students about religion."" He saw this concern as an opportunity for his college to "throw the whole weight of its influence on the side of religion, providing students with religious resources for decision, and encouraging them to develop their capacity

for faith."l"

However, Supreme Court decisions, particularly in the 1960s, made it clear that the academic study of religion in public institutions could not be prescriptive, though it could be descriptive. The Supreme Court also indicated that academic study should not be hostile to religion. All of this brought renewed calls for the "need" to teach students about the Bible without being doctrinal.13 As mentioned previously, Supreme Court decisions also spurred new efforts to preserve the Bible's presence in schools by shifting biblical studies away from historical criticism, especially in high school curricula, and more toward the teaching of the "Bible as literature."

So how are biblical studies taught in the wake of the Supreme Court's decisions? Judging by a recent comprehensive survey of Bible courses in Texas, "[m]ost Bible courses are taught as religious and devotional classes that promote one faith perspective over all others." 14 But lest we think that such an approach is characteristic only in lower educational institutions, the fact remains that higher education has not really changed the two traditional rationales offered for the study of the Bible. Such rationales are still advocated by prominent academic biblical scholars.

Consider Luke Timothy Johnson, a professor of biblical studies at Emory University, who recalls his experience at Yale Divinity School thusly: "The students at YDS were not predominantly the children of lifelong believers; they were not well shaped by church tradition and well read in the Bible, ready and eager to take on the red meat of critical study. Far from it."15 Johnson goes on to lament that "the critical apparatus actually blocked their capacity to use the Bible for theology, pastoral care, and prayer."16

Robert E. Mansbach, the Wolford Professor of Religion at Hartwick College and a Lutheran minister, notes that his courses are populated by students with a variety of views, ranging from atheism to Christianity and Judaism. Mansbach hopes that students will at least retain the following five items after taking courses in biblical studies:

> (1) see historical-critical problems as important, but important always within the framework of Judeo-Christian communities which produced the scriptures; (2) understand that, even if one is an atheist, this does not

> change the way in which the scripture-engendering communities understood themselves over time, *i.e.* as a people confronted, freed and blessed by God in history; (3) understand that, even if one is an atheist, these communities grew to affirm the uniqueness and universality of Yahweh's revelation (e.g., "I am Yahweh ... and there is no other," or "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased"); (4) know that these communities at their best saw themselves in tension with cultures calling for other, destructive allegiances; and (5) have a sense that these communities, at their best, saw God's empowering love and leveling justice as their historical mandate.'7

He adds: "Finally, in every effective method available, I would hope to build with the class a community in which they might experience a secular shadow or parallel of Christian acceptance, faith, loving empowerment, and leveling justice."' 8

Mansbach, like most other advocates of the academic study of the Bible, does not want to study the Bible or religion in order to examine negative or injurious aspects of either religion or the Bible. Some of the items Mansbach lists clearly assume that biblical religions have brought only good things that can be imitated even by secular people (e.g., "Christian acceptance ... loving empowerment"). Mansbach's fourth item sees biblical communities in tension with cultures that have "destructive allegiances," which implies that biblical religions advocated no destructive allegiances. Why not reverse this statement and say that we would want students to learn that nonbiblical cultures were often in tension with biblical cultures who called for "destructive allegiances"?

Sometimes we do see what appear to be more neutral-minded rationales, at least at first sight. Jack H. Schuster, an eminent student of higher education, advises the readers of the Religious Studies News, the newsletter of the American Academy of Religion, that "demand" by undergraduates to understand religion, especially in light of present global religious conflicts, is a good omen for religious studies programs.19 And indeed, the Chronicle of Higher Education: Almanac Issue 2006-07 records that 79.6 percent of fall 2005 freshman students attended a religious service in the year prior to the survey.20 We probably do need more understanding of religion, but such understanding should focus on how religion itself causes conflict, or even on how religion should be abandoned. This is something that few scholars, even Schuster, would

ever think to suggest.

In his penetrating analysis of the politics of religious studies, Donald Wiebe notes that the entire field of academic religious studies is still dominated by what we may denominate as "religionists."" Many are self described Christians who may no longer advocate a hierarchical and institutional Christianity. Instead, these religionists often favor a more eclectic form of "spirituality" or "religious praxis" that is tailored to elite individualistic lifestyles. However, this orientation still retains the idea that religion is essentially good, and that it should not be discarded altogether.

What has replaced "fundamentalism" is simply liberal religionism, as Wilfred Cantwell Smith, one of the most celebrated scholars of religion, admits when he speaks of biblical studies in academia:

> The courses actually available, and the training of men actually available to teach them, are on the whole calculated to turn a fundamentalist into a liberal .21

We now illustrate this point with a few notable institutions where religionism, though it may have diminished, has certainly not disappeared.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

As mentioned at the outset, Harvard began as a Puritan enterprise, the goal of which was to train ministers. The Statutes of Harvard (1646) state plainly that "Everyone shall consider the main End of his life and studies, to know God and Jesus Christ which is Eternal Life. John 17:3."23 The Bible was to be read at least twice a day. Students were expected to know the Bible in the original languages (Hebrew and Greek) and to translate them into Latin. The prestigious Hollis Professorship in Divinity was established in 1721.

By the 1800s, the days of Puritanism were long gone, and there was a marked decline in the number of students heading for the clergy. Between 1642 and 1721, 52 percent of the graduates became ministers, but between 1722 and 1801, that percentage had declined to twenty-seven.24 But the religionism had not disappeared; it had merely been transformed. Harvard went Unitarian in 1805 with the selection of the Unitarian Henry Ware as professor of divinity and

Samuel Webber as president of the university. As Harvard historian Samuel Eliot Morison phrases it, "Harvard had become a fortress of liberal outlook and faith."25

By 1816, a "Divinity School" had taken shape, and in 1870 the first degrees in divinity were granted.26 But the number of divinity graduates was dismal. Fourteen received degrees in 1872, a number that would not be surpassed until 1914.27 Judging by the words of James Bryant Conant, who presided over Harvard from 1933 to 1953, there seemed to be more of a willingness to disassemble the Divinity School during his presidency. Conant, a chemist by profession, and a hard-nosed rationalist by temperament, said that "the more criticism and pure reason can stick knives into the orthodox dogmas the better.... I still think the answer would be to give up all formal instruction in this emotional area and have an optional get together for a week on an extracurricular basis."28 Conant, in effect, came close to stating frankly that higher education should undermine religion, or at least the types he did not favor.

But liberal orthodoxy was resilient even under Conant. Conant suggested that philosopher-theologian Reinhold Niebuhr might make a good joint appointment in the Department of Philosophy and in the Divinity School. Willard Sperry, then the dean, seems to have been reticent. He reported that Niebuhr did not like the liberal Protestantism of the Divinity School. Niebuhr's version was that Sperry's wife did not like "someone so non-Unitarian in his theology joining the HDS faculty."29 Niebuhr added, "I would in fact have accepted if Harvard did not have a divinity school."30

Conant eventually appointed a commission to assess the future of the Harvard Divinity School. John Lord O'Brian, a Washington lawyer and a Harvard overseer, was given the task of heading that commission. Conant's charge was simple. He was to answer the question "Is there a place for a nondenominational Divinity School in Harvard University and, if so, what are the reasons for its existence?"" When O'Brian completed his report in 1946, he argued that there indeed was a place for the Divinity School at Harvard. Moreover, O'Brian urged Conant to increase the Divinity School's budget. Conant was not pleased. He cited the low quality of students and faculty and the Divinity School's weak economic basis as reasons for dissenting from O'Brian's conclusions.

It was an Iowan named Nathan Pusey who helped save the Harvard Divinity School from near extinction when he began his eighteen-year tenure as university president in 1953. Upon taking over the office, Pusey made it a point to ensure that the Divinity School survived. By 1960-1961, the $737,224 budget had quadrupled the 1954-1955 allocation. Overall, however, Pusey felt that pure academic scholarship was ruining the pastoral function of the Divinity School.

For a time, secularism seemed to be celebrated, and The Secular City (1965), by Harvey Cox, professor of Church and Society, became a symbol of that celebration.32 In Krister Stendahl, the Divinity School had a dean who was a bona fide biblical scholar. After serving as dean from 1968 to 1979, Stendahl went on to become the Lutheran Bishop of Stockholm, Sweden, his native country. But as we saw in our chapter on "Biblical Theology," Sten dahl also was an advocate of "recontextualization," which is simply another device to maintain the privilege of the Bible in the modern world. Thus, religionism continued, but in a different form.

What had changed by the 1960s and 1970s was an increasing religious pluralism. Jews, of course, had suffered overt discrimination by Harvard's admission policies, especially under President Abbot Lawrence Lowell (1909-1933).33 Catholics also were resisted, but eventually they grew in numbers, particularly under Nathan Pusey.34 Today, Catholics form the largest single group of students at Harvard Divinity School. Stendahl, in particular, encouraged more admissions of women and persons from religions that had been marginalized (e.g., Mormons).

When I arrived at Harvard Divinity School in 1983, the religionism was quite evident. Harvey Cox, who had previously thought that secularism was on the rise, now saw more religion in the secular city.35 I remember my surprise when John Strugnell, who became editor-in-chief of the DSS in 1984, walked with his hands in a prayer position the whole length of St. Paul's Catholic Church in Cambridge during the funeral for George MacRae, who had been a prominent New Testament scholar.36 I remember all of the discussions about liberation theology. The supposed pluralism came in the form of more openly gay and lesbian students and the small but increasing presence of ethnic minorities. Yet in the 1983-1984 Portrait Directory, I was the only student who openly identified as an "agnostic."37

In fact, what I witnessed at Harvard Divinity School was the consolidation of a liberal religionist hegemony. This hegemony did not tolerate socalled fundamentalism well. Jon Levenson, the Albert A. List Professor of Jewish Studies, has made a similar observation: "In the old days, one was required to believe certain theological dogmas: the incarnation of God in Jesus, the Resurrection, and so on. Now the School requires that one subscribe to radical feminism, to inclusive language, to their views on homosexuality. ... Political correctness is the new orthodoxy."38 According to a recent popular guide to Harvard, "there is a strong religious presence on campus."39

In the twenty-first century, religionism is still not completely gone from Harvard. The most recent dean of Harvard Divinity School, William A. Graham (2002-), is the first to hold that position without ministerial training. However, the Harvard Divinity School is still training ministers. Its graduates and faculty are extremely influential in promoting a positive view of religion in life. Its current luminaries include Jon D. Levenson, who is a vocal Jewish traditionalist; Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, the feminist New Testament scholar; and Diana Eck, a prominent scholar of Hinduism.

Two new professorships, announced in 2006, only make the religionism stronger.40 One is endowed by Thomas M. Chappell, an alumnus who founded a successful company called Tom's of Maine, which specializes in ecofriendly products such as natural toothpaste. The new professorship, called the Richard Reinhold Niebuhr Professorship of Divinity is meant to address "issues of Christian morality, ethics and values in the contemporary interaction of religion and society."41 Another professorship, called the Ralph Waldo Emerson Unitarian Universalist Association Professorship of Divinity, "will advance studies in liberal religion, with particular attention to Unitarian Universalism."42

More importantly, Harvard Divinity School is joining the bandwagon of those who believe that science and religion are compatible rather than immiscible. A major donor, Richard T. Watson, has provided funds to create the Richard T. Watson Professorship of Science and Religion. The professorship "is intended to advance research and thinking on the contemporary interrelations of science and religion via multidisciplinary initiatives."43 At the same time, the Harvard Divinity School and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences accepted a grant from the Templeton Foundation "to study the origins of altruistic behavior through the lenses of biology, theology, and ethics."44

So is a divinity school an anachronism at a place such as Harvard? We can celebrate Harvard Divinity School's enormous contributions to biblical and religious studies. Liberals and secular humanists might even welcome its prestige in counterbalancing "fundamentalist" segments of Christianity. But those contributions also form the very argument to end biblical studies. Conant had it right in our estimation, but we go further in affirming that the goal of any university should be to undermine not just orthodox theology but all types of theology. Harvard Divinity School, therefore, remains quite religionist by this standard.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

The University of Chicago, which opened its doors in 1892, exemplifies an institution that began amid a growing optimism in technological and scientific approaches to life. One would think that, unlike Harvard, which began as a Puritan enterprise, the University of Chicago would have a more secularized beginning. The contrary is the case. In order to understand the religionist aspects of the University of Chicago, we need look no further than the founding president, William Rainey Harper (1856-1906), a biblical and Near Eastern scholar. Fortunately, Harper has been the subject of a critical biography by James P. Wind, from whom we distill much of our account.45

William Rainey Harper was born on July 24, 1856, in New Concord, Ohio. His family was strongly Presbyterian, though he later became a Baptist. An excellent student, Harper eventually went to Yale, where he studied Near Eastern languages. In March of 1888, Harper outlined the following traits in his conception of scientific biblical studies:

> (1) scientific methods are employed; (2) adherence is maintained to the laws of human speech; (3) allowance is made for all the factors which enter into the problem under consideration; (4) the truth is sought, regardless of previous preconceptions.46

But, these "scientific" methods never prevented Harper from espousing utterly unscientific views of the world, such as this:

> God is unchangeable in that he always acts with certain eternal,

unchangeable principles. He is unchangeable in so far as he is continually presenting to us everywhere enlarging manifestations of himself and of his plans.47

And although Harper rejected or modified many of the positions we deem traditional, he had a decided bias toward the superiority of biblical religions.

In comparing Near Eastern accounts of the origin of the world, for example, he said that non-Hebrew accounts were "polytheistic in the extreme, even pantheistic; confusing, confounding; characterized by imperfections and weaknesses of every kind; remarkably similar in tone and spirit to the mythological productions of Greece and Rome."48 But the biblical accounts were "monotheistic, ethical; clear, and distinct; unhesitating. Well nigh perfect in form and utterance, sublime in tone and spirit; as unlike Greek and Roman myths as the sun is unlike the moon."49

So how is the University of Chicago different in more recent times? Certainly, the denominationalism is not as apparent. The Divinity School has endured the withering criticisms of religious studies by one of its own faculty members, Jonathan Z. Smith.5° But religionism has been apparent in the work of Martin Marty, one of the most influential scholars of American religion today. As the guiding force of the Fundamentalism Project, Marty has been a leading advocate of the view that many of the problems of violence are due to "fundamentalism," which presumes that nonfundamentalist forms of religion are betters'

But more importantly, the Divinity School bills itself as "the largest single institutional educator of faculty members for theological seminaries, departments of theology, and programs in religious studies across the spectrum of educational institutions that comprise American higher education."52 In short, we still have a major elite university promoting the maintenance of theological education in modern society instead of helping people to go beyond theology.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

Unlike Harvard or the University of Chicago, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is a public institution, which is part of a larger state university

system that is answerable to the state government. The beginning of instruction in biblical studies was ostensibly secularly oriented, as witnessed by this resolution adopted by the Board of Trustees in 1928, in response to a petition for instruction in the "literary and historical phases of the Bible."

> That the Trustees favor the inclusion in the University curriculum of instruction in the history and literature of religion on the same basis as instruction is given in other fields of human activity to be given by instructors to be chosen by the Board of Trustees of the University.53

Since then, the Department of Religious Studies at the flagship University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has been home to some luminaries, such as Jack Sasson and the best-selling New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman, who has done much to elucidate the corruption of the text of the New Testament. A former professor, John Van Seters helped to erode the notion of the historicity of the patriarchs.54

But despite its seemingly secularized situation, we can still find religionism in its Department of Religious Studies, where I was a postdoctoral fellow from 1991 to 1993. Carl Ernst, for example, has been a strong advocate for the view that Islam is essentially peaceful. Ernst's book Following Muhammad begins by noting the problem of seeing Islam as non-Western.55 He offers the familiar claim that Islamic fundamentalism is a response to European colonialism. He concludes, "Following Muhammad ... is the responsibility of those who consider themselves Muslim. It is the responsibility of non-Muslims to acknowledge the legitimacy of this enterprise."56

In 2002, Ernst was asked by the university to recommend a book that would be assigned to incoming freshman students during the summer. The book was to be an introduction to Islam. Ernst recommended about one hundred thirty pages of Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations by Michael Sells.57 There was an uproar when some accused him of proselytizing on behalf of Islam. Terry Moffitt, a university alumnus and the chairman of the Family Policy Network, a conservative Christian organization, filed a lawsuit against the university in an effort to reverse the university's decision to require the book.58 Unfortunately, the state legislature failed to support Ernst's academic freedom, even though federal courts sided with Ernst.

I strongly support the academic right of Ernst to select the books on Islam he sees as appropriate. Yet, as I have pointed out in Fighting Words: The Origins of Religious Violence (2005), Ernst is an essentialist who uses what amounts to unverifiable theological claims to decide what a "true" interpretation of Islam is.59 Thus, even in this more secularized public school we find scholars boosting the idea that religion, or at least Islam, is essentially good, and that only deviations from the "true" form are the problem. This is simply another form of religionism.

SUMMARY

As we noted earlier, two contradictory rationales for biblical studies have been offered in higher academia. One is that there is demand for biblical studies. Yet judging by various statistical surveys, this is a very superficial "demand." Interest in knowing the Bible is minimal, even among those who profess to follow the Bible, and even among those who plan to make it part of their profession. Such illiteracy has been demonstrated by a variety of scientific surveys conducted by both secular and religionist organizations. Recall that 21.9 percent of mainline Protestants and 33.1 percent of Catholics "never" read Scripture, according to the 2006 Baylor University survey.60 And of those who read it, many don't read it well.

Moreover, academics don't often acknowledge that the limited demand we do see is the result of broader marketing mediated through churches and their own efforts to validate the Bible's beauty, ethics, or contributions to history, which are usually spun in a positive light.b' The maintenance of the Bible is also enforced in religious studies programs/departments. According to an AAR survey of undergraduate religion course offerings for 1999-2000, 52.1 percent of responding religious studies departments or programs required a course in Christianity-New Testament, and 50.4 percent required Christianity-Old Testament, to complete a major.62 Compare that to the 2.9 percent that required Confucianism/Taoism. The Christian bias is quite evident.

The other rationale, which seeks to reverse the declining importance of the Bible, is actually much more accurate in describing what has been the situation. Our brief history demonstrates that many professors of biblical studies acknowledge that the privileging of the Bible by the modern world would probably end if it were not for their intervention. That is to say, these religionist

faculty members themselves, and not atheists, recognize that it is not really demand that is behind their promotion of the study of the Bible in higher education, but rather the loss of demand that they feel must be reversed. If the demand for the Bible were to end, these scholars know that biblical studies, the source of their livelihood, would also end.

NOTES

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Chapter 8

THE SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE

thousands of academics talking about religion and the Bible within the confines of nice hotels and you have a picture of what the Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting is like. The 2005 annual meeting held in Philadelphia offered a particularly stark contrast between SBL members and the broader American society. Around the convention hotels such as the Hilton and the Marriott were dozens of destitute and homeless people that scholars hardly noticed as they ran from one conference to another. Sometimes these academics nearly trampled the poor to get to another show and to see another bright star talk about liberation theology and the prophetic call to help the poor and powerless.

That whole scene is a metaphor for what ails not just the Society of Biblical Literature but also the entire academic field called biblical studies. For there was little hint or hope that anything that ever was said in any session of the Society of Biblical Literature would ever make the world around it better. Yet there is plenty of applause and felicitation for those who deliver an entertaining disquisition. What Jean-Jacques Rousseau said about the elite intellectual pursuits in the academies of his day applies to the SBL today: "There are thousands of prizes for fine discourses, none for fine deeds."'

The Society of Biblical Literature, consisting of over seven thousand members, is the largest organization of academic biblical scholars in the world.' As such, it aids in keeping biblical studies afloat. Despite claims that it is devoted to the "critical" study of scripture, the vast majority of members are actually part of a religionist enterprise centered on maintaining their elite leisure pursuit, called "biblical studies," at the expense of churches, consumers, and taxpayers. Most members of the SBL, including myself, read papers mainly to each other. Attending a session of an annual meeting is a study in irrelevance.

Of course, one can say the same about the professional meetings of most academic organizations. And the fact is that much of the following critique of the SBL applies to many other fields, especially in the humanities. However,

unlike conferences in sciences, where there might be an application of some new technology or an effort to make laws work better for society, not much of what is learned at the SBL will matter much to anyone but the attendees seeking to promote their own employment.

Most SBL members today probably do not remember that a former president of the SBL, Morton S. Enslin, sounded a near death-knell on December 27, 1945. In a presidential address titled "The Future of Biblical Studies," he posed the question "Is There a Future for Biblical Studies?"3 His initial answer is "Of course there is."4 But the rest of his speech is not so optimistic, and near the end he proclaims that "we are destroying our future through showing ourselves unworthy of having one."5

Enslin, indeed, had a lot of worries. He was writing in the aftermath of WWII, which had decimated biblical scholarship and other university disciplines in Europe. It fell to America to assume a leadership role in biblical studies. But he admitted that "the same virus which has poisoned German scholarship in the last few years is in our blood, though perhaps in a somewhat different form."6 The German virus was the use of biblical scholarship in the service of Nazism. Similarly, Enslin thought that the danger in America was "the demand that our researchers strengthen faith and provide blueprints for modern conduct."7

He rejected the idea that academia should feel as if "we owe it to our students to aid them to a warm religious attitude to life, to a deeper more satisfying faith."8 He characterized as "utterly false and vicious" any emphasis on the idea that "we are ministers before we are scholars."9 In fact, Enslin saw that such an approach to biblical studies would bring disdain from other sectors of universities, and he cited examples.

Enslin was right about how biblical studies was then being approached. But in advocating an approach wherein biblical studies might not produce anything practical, Enslin was unwittingly advocating a field that had nothing to offer human beings. The field would be kept alive solely for its own sake of finding "truths." Such "truth" might be interesting to some, but it may no longer warrant spending millions of dollars on salaries to professors who cannot produce anything of consequence. If Enslin had his way, biblical studies might not be much more than a very elite form of Sudoku, where languages are needed to solve puzzles and answer questions that have no benefit beyond satisfying the

curiosity of the scholars who participate in the game.

BRIEF HISTORY

According to Burton J. Bledstein, an acute historian of academia, the culture of professionalism began around the end of the Civil War, amid a struggle to validate an emerging middle class.10 Indeed, in the 1860s through 1880s, we already have a partial but impressive list of new organizations.1'

1864	American Ophthalmological Society
1868	American Otological Society
1876	American Chemical Society
1880	American Society of Chemical Engineers
1880	Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis
1883	American Ornithologists Union
1883	American Society of Naturalists
1884	American Climatological Society
1885	American Institute of Electrical Engineers
1888	Geological Society of America
1888	American Pediatric Society

Right in the middle of this growth is the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, which later shortened its name to the Society of Biblical Literature.

Members of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) also wanted to be seen as participating in a profession that was somewhat independent of church control. Some scholars were growing fonder of the critical methods that were germinating in Europe, particularly in England and in Germany. The response of American biblical scholars was mixed. They wanted to be part of the "research"-oriented approaches that had come to America from Germany, in particular." But the first members were all ministers. Despite the claim to more objective and historical approaches, a report of the 1887 meeting states that "[m]any of the papers disclose conservative to moderate positions with reference to critical study of the scriptures."13

If we look at the individuals who became president of the society, we see continuity in terms of their religionism. In the first quarter century of the SBL's

history (1880-1905), we find that presidents came from the mainline and elite churches in America, notably the Presbyterian, Unitarian, and Lutheran churches. We do not find any women as presidents, nor do we find any Jews among the presidents at this time.

If we fast-forward to the most recent quarter century (1981-2006), we find that some things have changed and that other things have remained the same. One notable change is that four women have served as president (Carolyn Osiek, 2005; Adele Berlin, 2000; Phyllis Trible, 1994; Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, 1987). But the denominational affiliations have remained rather stable, with the exception of a handful of Catholic and two Jewish presidents. Otherwise, the denominational lines are very similar to what we had in the first quarter century, and these include Presbyterians (e.g., Patrick D. Miller, 1998; Phyllis Trible, 1994) and Lutherans (e.g., Helmut Koester, 1991; Krister Stendahl, 1983). Even the addition of more Catholic presidents reflects the ongoing significance of large, established denominations. What is absent is any openly atheist or secular humanist presidents.

Many presidents of the Society of Biblical Literature have not been shy about their religionist orientation. In 1947, Ernest Cadman Colwell served as president of the Society of Biblical Literature. He had once served as dean of the Divinity School at the University of Chicago and he later became the first president of the Southern California School of Theology at Claremont. For Colwell, a main concern was closing the gap between divinity schools and departments of religion in public universities. As he phrased it, "a vigorous department of religion in the college can be an effective link between the original vocation and the registration of the student ultimately in the seminary." 14 In other words, Colwell hoped that departments of religion in public universities would prevent students, who originally intended to go to seminary, from deviating into other professions.

If one looks at recent strategic plans of the SBL, one realizes that such a religionist agenda has not changed much since Colwell. According to the SBL Society Report 2004, the SBL has the following as one of its goals: "Develop new resources for diverse audiencs, including students, religious communities, and the general public." 15 The SBL Report is even more explicit a few pages later.

> The Society connections with theological education have been strong throughout our 125 year history. We began a new initiative to renew and strengthen our ties with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS)... . We asked them what we could do to better serve their institutions and fac ulties.... We believe that the Society mission to foster biblical scholarship is closely akin to the mission of theological education to prepare students through the study of scripture.16

Our argument is not that the presidents of the SBL cannot be both biblical scholars and have religious commitments. Rather, our argument is that the presidents, and most of the membership of the SBL, still do reflect religious commitments despite claims to be relatively independent of denominational agendas. The fact that no president of the Society of Biblical Literature has been an active atheist or secularist speaks volumes about the religionist orientation of the Society. The SBL is religionist to the core.

WHAT SCHOLARS CARE ABOUT

The Society of Biblical Literature has met jointly with the American Academy of Religion (AAR) since 1970." Being part of both, I can see some stark differences in what scholars care about just by tracking the attendance in each session. In general, the SBL is still more materially and textually oriented than people oriented. That is to say, SBL members care a lot about ancient objects and linguistic minutiae related to the Bible rather than about how anything in the Bible will impact living populations.

Consider this case. In 2005 the big buzz was a nearly illegible inscription found at Tel Zayit, a site about twenty-five miles east of Ashkelon, which is being excavated by Professor Ron Tappy of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. As is typical of such discoveries, archaeologists wanted to describe their discovery with superlatives such as "best example," "the biggest," the "earliest," or "the most important." The room was full of hundreds of spectators, including myself. There was wide press coverage.

On the other hand, those who conducted sessions on Latinos or on Disability Studies were wishing that they could count even thirty-five persons in attendance. Indeed, lectures on pots, inscriptions, and walls still attract the biggest crowds. Of course, there is nothing inherently wrong with caring about a

new inscription. The problem is the disproportional attention paid to the different topics, and the underlying ethics of such a disproportion.

Consider the fact that most people in the ancient world did not live in big cities or know how to write. The disproportionate interest in big cities and writing by many archaeologists reflects not so much an effort to paint a full picture of life in ancient times as it does an interest in the parts of the culture that can be exhibited to modern audiences or that can be studied relatively easily. We can show pots and we can read inscriptions, but it is more difficult to get people excited about the health problems that eventually afflicted 100 percent of the people that ever lived in ancient times.

Likewise, the disproportionate amount of attention to ancient objects ignores the rapidly changing demographics of America. Latinos now form the largest "minority" group in America, with over 40 million persons. Latinos are people living in the United States who trace their roots to the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America. At present, Latinos are undergoing a revolution that will change American and world religion. It is estimated that some six hundred thousand Latinos per year switch from Catholicism to Protestantism, and changes in biblical interpretation are part of that phenomenon.[18] Yet there is still more interest in ancient legendary characters than in masses of real people living all around biblical scholars today. Despite some efforts by the leadership to be more ethnically inclusive, the SBL is still a very segregated society.

THE *JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE*

It is fair to say that the Journal of Biblical Literature (JBL) published by the Society of Biblical Literature, is the premier journal in biblical studies in the world. Certainly, the pages of the journal have been graced by articles from some of the most talented male biblical scholars in the world. I say "male" because in the twenty-first century, the androcentrism of the JBL is one of its most striking continuities with the founders, who were all male. Consider that for the year 2005 the flagship JBL registered a total of thirty articles on its cover pages. Of these, only two articles, or 6 percent (of thirty), were by women.[19] According to the 2005 SBL Society Report, of the nineteen articles accepted for publication between November 6, 2004, and November 5, 2005, only three, or 15 percent (of nineteen), were by women.[20]

At the same time, an examination of the contents of the JBL also signals the utter despair of the field. First, there is not much that is new to report. Second, unlike science journals, which might report new discoveries that will make a difference in human welfare, biblical studies journals often concentrate on minutiae that will matter to no one but the scholars themselves.

Journals, of course, must publish articles to survive. Such publications partly are driven by academia, which demands the production of "research" publications. Junior faculty will not receive tenure at most public universities without some semblance of "research." At the same time, it is prestigious to edit a journal, and editors, if anything, are judged by the vitality and quality of the journal. But quality is mainly judged on the technical competence of the author rather than on the practical applications of the research. So we are treated to article upon article that rehearses old questions and brings few answers that matter.

An illustrative case is the article published in 2000 titled "Psalm 22:17b: More Guessing .1121 It aims to respond to two earlier articles in the Journal of Biblical Literature on the very same portion of a verse. These articles are titled "Psalm 22:17b: `The Old Guess"' (1997) and "Psalm 22:17b: Second Guessing `The Old Guess"' (1998).22 If we want to learn why so many articles are concentrating on a tiny fraction of the Bible, we need to read the RSV translation of Psalm 22:16 (22:17 in the Hebrew Bible):

> Yea, dogs are round about me; a company of evildoers encircle me; they have pierced my hands and feet.

As scholars have long known, the phrase "they have pierced" does not really represent the Hebrew text (the Masoretic Text). To achieve that translation, scholars have to change the Hebrew text for it to make sense. Instead of "they have pierced," the actual Hebrew text has a Hebrew word, 'ry, which is best translated as "lion," and which is preceded by a Hebrew preposition, meaning "as" or "like." Thus, if one did use the actual Hebrew text, the verse may be translated literally as:

> Yea, dogs are round about me;
> a company of evildoers encircle me,
> Like a lion my hands and feet.[23]

The problem is that there seems to be a verb missing in that last line. Even if we understand the verse to say, "my feet and hands (are) like a lion," the whole clause seems incompatible with the attack being depicted. Thus, many scholars simply change "like a lion" into a verb such as "pierce," "dig," or "shrivel," as in the NRSV "my hands and feet are shriveled."

Of course, it would be more honest to translate the text as it is found, but that only recalls our argument that translations often are meant to hide biblical infelicities rather than to expose them. Indeed, it is difficult to avoid the implication that "they pierced my hands and feet" often has been retained because it historically has served Christian arguments that Jesus' crucifixion is being prophesied in that Psalm. The apologetic use of this Psalm, in fact, can be traced at least as far back as the debates between Trypho the Jew and Justin Martyr in the second century.24

In any case, Brent Strawn believes he has a "new guess," meaning a new verb to substitute for an "old guess," which refers to the Hebrew verb, 'Sr, translated as "bind." In short, one needs to change the Hebrew word from 'ry to 'sr. But when using that latter verb, this translation results:

> Yea, dogs are round about me;
> a company of evildoers encircle me,
> They have bound my hands and feet.

Strawn's solution involves looking at ancient illustrations of war captives and lion attacks to support the idea of "binding," albeit by using yet another Hebrew root (kwr) with a similar meaning to 'sr. This solution intends to produce fewer changes to the Hebrew text.

But, in the end, Strawn concludes that he still cannot make any sense of the text as it stands. He remarks that the old guess "may very well be the `best guess' thus far available."25 And after granting that the Hebrew word "may just mean `like a lion' after all," he concludes:

> If so, then the problem in the passage must lie elsewhere, probably in a verb that has dropped out. Which verb might have been lost constitutes another guess.... Who knows how many more guesses will come along before the crux at Ps 22:17b is solved once and for all? Only one thing is

certain: in the present methodological context, recourse to the versions and to scholarly emendations is no longer enough.z6

To recapitulate, the article tells us that it has nothing new to tell us. The new guess it ventures is no better than the old guess. The recourse to iconography, which promised to shed light, only leads us to the options considered without the use of those illustrations.

We do not intend to focus only on Strawn, for all the journals in biblical studies are beset with a similar problem of relevance. Even if the crux were to be "solved," we would still need to explain why anyone should care that it has been solved in the first place. It constitutes simply another instance of bibliolatry, wherein the "problems" of the biblical text are viewed as important. Expending effort to solve these "problems" functions only to maintain the employment of biblical scholars while yielding no more benefit for humanity than solving Sudoku puzzles.

SCHOLARS AS HEROES

Any careful study of journal articles reveals that they have a familiar pattern found in many ancient heroic legends. Consider the legend of the Twelve Labors of Herakles, where Herakles (aka Hercules) finds ingenious solutions to problems that had defeated human beings.27 In more schematic form, in the legends of Herakles we often see: (1) a problem presented; (2) a review of how the problem had defeated human beings before him; (3) Herakles's specific and ingenious solution to the problem; and (4) a triumphant conclusion.

If we look at a typical journal article in biblical studies, we see that it begins with a statement of a problem or challenge. Following this is a review of past research, which usually shows that the problem has not been completely solved by previous scholars. This section is then followed by the author's proposal to solve the problem. Finally, a conclusion is announced, and usually the author presents himself as triumphant or as "contributing" something new. If we express this in outline form, it would be as follows:

1. Identification of a problem

II. Review of unsuccessful efforts to solve the problem

III. Proposal to solve the problem

IV. Triumphant conclusion

Indeed, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that most scholarly works are narratives in which the author inscribes himself as the hero, as opposed to those heroic narratives where others inscribe the hero. Even in the case of the "new guess" for Psalm 22:17b, where nothing much seems accomplished, the author attempted to display skills and new approaches that previous scholars had ignored.

To some extent, such articles must be heroic narratives because they are partly generated by the demand for "excellence" and competition for the precious few jobs available in biblical studies. The articles are the equivalent of the Herculean tasks given to scholars by the academy. However, all this does not lessen the point that many, if not most, journal articles are written mostly for the benefit of the author or other members of the SBL. Very few of the articles will ever be read by those outside of the SBL or yield much benefit for anyone outside of the SBL.

NO JOB FOR YOU

The SBL is the agent of a dying profession. To understand this claim concerning biblical studies, we begin with the generally optimistic picture for religious studies produced by Jack H. Schuster, who studies trends in higher education. He noted that in the three-year period of 2002-2004, the number of PhDs in religious studies "increased by a robust 27.1 percent compared to the corresponding number awarded in 1994-96."28 In the latter period, 817 PhDs were awarded, while 1,039 were awarded in the 2002-2004 period. Schuster also remarked that this increase outpaced that of doctorates in philosophy (14.8 percent) and history (15.6 percent) in the two periods.

However, the percentage of increase looks impressive because the numbers are relatively small. Consider that according to the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago the total number of PhDs awarded in 2004 in religious studies was 388, a number dwarfed by the 5,937 doctorates awarded in 2004 in the biological/biomedical sciences, or even the 1,221 doctorates awarded in clinical psychology.29

Moreover, the figures cited by Schuster do not seriously consider the dearth in the numbers of positions available. If we use the same three-year periods used by Schuster, the results are sobering. According to the American Academy of Religion (AAR), which tracks the number of job openings and job candidates that use its employment information services every year, these were the total number of positions open in religious studies in these periods.3o

2002–04	371
1994–96	321

This would give us a seemingly impressive 15.5 percent increase in 2002-04 relative to 1994-96. However, on a yearly basis, the total number of open positions remains small. After all, there are only 148 position openings registered for 2005 for all areas of religious studies.31

More important, the largest number of positions are in religiously affiliated institutions, rather than in relatively more secularized public institutions, where scholarly research is emphasized. The AAR reports that in 1999-2000 there were a total of 2,948 tenured undergraduate professors of religion and theology.32 Of these, 1,544, or 52 percent, were in Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish institutions. Public institutions are listed as having 819 tenured faculty members, or 27 percent of the total (of 2,948). Although it is difficult to assess the religious affiliations of full-time faculty in all of academia, one of the better estimates is that 36.8 percent of all faculty in "liberal arts and sciences" report their religious identification as "none," which contrasts starkly with what is found among professors of religious studies and theology.33

As is the case in the broader sector of higher education, most of those positions are becoming nontenure track and temporary. Schuster himself has studied this problem, and notes that in 2003 some "58.6 percent ... of all new full time faculty appointments were made off the tenure track."34 In 1999-2000 the AAR reported that of all the persons classified as professors of religion and theology (9,013), 3,494 were classified as "part-time" and 393 had "terminal" contracts.35

When we look more closely at biblical studies and its related subdisciplines, the picture goes from optimistic to apocalyptic. According to the AAR, we had the following numbers of position openings and candidates in areas most related

to biblical studies in 2005:36

	positions	candidates
Ancient Near Eastern Languages	0	2
Archaeology-Ancient Near East	0	1
Biblical Languages	0	1
Epigraphy	0	0
Hebrew Bible/Old Testament	12	69
New Testament	13	71

It is true that the AAR has added specialties that were not recorded in earlier years (e.g., epigraphy, biblical languages), which may yield a very dismal picture of that specialty. However, even when we look at the classifications that have remained the same, we see deterioration, as the numbers from 1996 indicate :17

	positions	candidates
Hebrew Bible/Old Testament	27	88
Early Christian Lit./New Testament	27	95

We grant that comparing any one year with another can bring a large fluctuation. But even when we compare two three-year periods, we see a similar decline in the number of positions open:38

	1996–98	2003–05
Hebrew Bible/Old Testament	61	35 (-43%)
Early Christian Lit./New Testament	76	38 (-50%)

And when we look at the quality of the positions, we see again that the picture is very bleak. Many of the positions are in denominational schools, whose academic standards and research requirements are not as rigorous as those of public research universities and the private elite institutions. For example, the number of languages for which some level of certification is expected by the time one completes a PhD program in Hebrew Bible at Harvard is about 4-8

(e.g., Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, German, French, and perhaps Latin, Akkadian, and Ugaritic).

But very few other institutions have the capability to teach all of those languages. Consequently, such graduates lack the linguistic equipment necessary to be an excellent biblical scholar. Moreover, very few undergraduate students today are interested in ancient languages, and so the pool of well-qualified doctoral students is diminishing. It is no surprise, therefore, that prominent programs have closed, as was the case of William G. Dever's program in Near Eastern Archaeology at the University of Arizona, once a jewel in the field.

The September 2006 issue of Openings, the most widely used advertising venue for jobs in religious studies, registers 191 advertisements.39 Of these, thirty-eight list their primary field as being in biblical studies, Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, or New Testament. When one compares the number of these thirty-eight openings in secular (e.g., public universities or private nonsectarian schools) versus religionist schools (e.g., church-affiliated, divinity schools), one forms the following profile:

Primary field	**Religionist**	**Secular**
Biblical studies	4	0
OT/Hebrew Bible	12	4
New Testament	17	1

Not only are there very few jobs in biblical studies overall, but clearly they are not thriving in our most secular institutions.

All of these problems also do not take into account the numbers of scholars who are leaving the field altogether. These numbers may be few and very difficult to estimate, but my personal knowledge indicates that in the past five to ten years, institutions such as Duke, Florida State, and Stanford have each lost at least one scholar who left to do something else, even when their institutional standings were sound. Moreover, the losses involved scholars with the highest levels of training. Thus, what may increase is the number of denominational "scholars" who are even less inclined to do critical research on the Bible.

THE SBL FORUM

The desperate measures to which members of the SBL have gone to deny the demise of the profession have been most apparent in what is called "The SBL Forum." The forum is meant to foster discussion of important issues affecting biblical studies. The essays are often authored by some of the most prominent names in the field. The editor, Leonard Greenspoon of Creighton University (Nebraska), is himself an excellent biblical scholar with special interest in the portrayal of the Bible in the popular media.

In May of 2006, I published an essay titled "The Ideology of the SBL and the Demise of an Academic Profession" on the SBL Forum Web site.40 The essay was a summary of my arguments in this book. I knew that it would draw the ire of many of my fellow members of the SBL, but I still did not know what sorts of specific counterarguments might be made. When the responses arrived, they only confirmed my charges that the SBL membership is largely pursuing biblical studies for religionist agendas and that they really cannot justify their profession very well.

Let's briefly consider some of the counterarguments that I received. One respondent, Daniel Gaztambide, countered that biblical studies was indeed relevant because counselors could help victims of Interpersonal Violence (IPV) see how the "misuse" of the Bible has resulted in their abuse. Gaztambide specifically cited the work of another SBL member, a counselor and pastor named Ronald Clark, as follows:

> One example Clark has noted often in his treatment and interaction with couples plagued by IPV, is abuser's use of Eph 5:22-24 (Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord ...), in which they demand total submission from their spouses ... while completely ignoring the following verses speaking about the husbands' equality with and submission to their wives (Eph 5:25-33)!41

In fact, Ephesians 5:25-33 displays no such sentiments of equality between husband and wife. There is nothing in those verses requiring a husband to submit to the wife "in everything," whereas the wife is required to submit to the husband "in everything" in Ephesians 5:24.

But such glaring misrepresentations of the biblical text aside, this example only manages to show how superfluous biblical scholars are. First, the argument

assumes that the clients need biblical scholars to tell them to read just a few more verses. Why can't the clients just read those verses for themselves? Second, if reaching an alternative interpretation requires the client to read only a few more verses, then what is the need for a PhD in biblical studies? Thus, this example only shows the desperate efforts of scholars to make people believe that their scholarship matters much in such practical cases.

Demographics formed another frequent counterargument. Since millions of people have the Bible as their sacred book, that measure alone shows that the Bible cannot be irrelevant. However, as I argue in the introduction to this present volume, such demographic arguments are very superficial. First, it is not really "the Bible" to which Christians are turning, but rather to a text that has been represented to readers as "the Bible" by scholars. I have argued that translations actually obscure "the Bible," if that means the source from which these translations are made. Most readers, therefore, are harboring the false illusion that they are reading "the Bible" when they are not.

But even if we say that translations are an accurate representation of "the Bible" as originally written, I have pointed to various statistical studies that show that most self-described Christians do not read beyond a very small portion of the Bible. After all, many biblical scholars have said that even they would not fault Christians for ignoring Leviticus, among many other portions of the Bible. Recall again the words of Estes as he tried to assess the relevance ("continuity") of biblical texts for modern audiences: "Indisputable examples of total continuity between the two audiences are relatively rare."42

Indeed, if we went verse by verse, Christians are probably not reading or applying some 95 percent of all the verses in the Bible. Of course, what they do apply may be of great consequence, but it remains the case that Christians are using or applying only a fraction of the Bible, and probably would not miss major portions if they were removed. Support for such a claim is evidenced by the large number of New Testaments being sold, something that reinforces the idea that this portion of the Bible is sufficient or essential on its own. Thus, the demographic argument is deceptive without a closer look at what is meant by "the Bible" and what portion of the Bible people are actually reading and applying.

Finally, arguments for "demand" for the Bible ignore my argument that

scholars are themselves creating the demand through marketing forces mediated by churches, academia, and a media-publishing complex. In previous chapters, we have detailed the ways in which the Bible is made palatable for modern audiences. If such scholars were more honest and vociferous about the failure of biblical scholarship to recover any "original text" of the Bible or about the failure to find any historical Jesus, then less people, not more, would want to read the Bible at all.

SUMMARY

The SBL is the agent of a profession that is desperately trying to pretend that it matters in the world. Under such circumstance, the SBL functions primarily to maintain the value of the profession of biblical scholarship despite the fact that its scholars admit the irrelevance of biblical norms and cultures in the modern world. Basically, biblical scholars would like to be paid to read and write on subjects of enjoyment to them rather than on subjects that will help the world.

More important, an argument can be made that privileging the Bible does not help the world except to keep alive a text that repeatedly is used as an authority for violence, racism, sexism, and the like. Scholars know it, but the effort to keep themselves in business requires them to support religionism and bibliolatry instead of the effort to try to help the world move beyond the Bible. The members of the SBL fail to understand that the more altruistic response is to affirm that the only mission of biblical studies should be to end biblical studies as we know it.

NOTES

1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 22. In French: "Il y a mille prix pour les beaux discours, aucun pour les belles actions." French text in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Oeuvres Completes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Geneva: Bibliotheque de la Pleiade, 1964), 3:25.

2. Statistics are from the official SBL Society Report 2006 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature), p. 17. It is available at http://www.sbl-site.org/PDF/SocietyReport 2006.pdf (accessed March 12, 2007).

3. Morton S. Enslin, "The Future of Biblical Studies," JBL 65 (1946): 1-12.

4. Ibid., p. 2.

5. Ibid., p. 9.

6. Ibid., p. 5.

7. Ibid., p. 6.

8. Ibid., p. 7.

9. Ibid.

10. Burton J. Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America (New York: Norton & Norton, 1976). See also Alvin W. Gouldner, The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

11. Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism, pp. 85-86.

12. See the older but still useful history of Jerry Wayne Brown, The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, 1800-1870: The New England Scholars (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1969).

13. Ernest W. Saunders, Searching the Scriptures: A History of the Society of Biblical Literature, 1880-1980 (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1982), p. 11.

14. Ernest Cadman Colwell, "Closing the Gap between College and Seminary," Journal of Bible and Religion 26 (1958): 109.

15. [Kent Harold Richards], SBL Society Report 2004 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature), p. 10. The report is available at http://www.sbl site.org/PDF/Society Report2004.pdf (accessed September 22, 2006).

16. Ibid., p. 12.

17. For a brief history of the American Academy of Religion, see

http://www.aarweb.org/about/history.asp (accessed August 25, 2006).

18. See Hector Avalos, ed., Introduction to the U.S. Latina and Latino Religious Experience (Boston: Brill, 2004); Avalos, Strangers in Our Own Land: Religion and U.S. Latina/o Literature (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005).

19. Jodi Magness, "Ossuaries and the Burials of Jesus and James," JBL 124 (2005): 121-54; Daphne Arbel, "Questions about Eve's Iniquity: Beauty and the Fall: The `Primal Figure' in Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Genesis Rabbah Traditions of Eve," JBL 124 (2005): 641-55.

20. [Richards] SBL Society Report 2005 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature), p. 4, available at http://www.sbl-site.org/PDF/SocietyReport2005.pdf (accessed September 22, 2006).

21. Brent A. Strawn, "Psalm 22:17b: More Guessing," JBL 119 (2000): 429-51.

22. Gregory Vall, "Psalm 22:17b: `The Old Guess,'" JBL 116 (1997): 45-56; John Kaltner, "Psalm 22:17b: Second Guessing `The Old Guess.'" JBL 117 (1998): 503-506. And, if this was not enough, we have Kristin M. Swenson, "Psalm 22:17: Circling around the Problem Again," JBL 123 (2004): 637-48.

23. The Hebrew text in the last line is: >5a11 >7> 'IND.

24. Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, A Jew, p. 97. For the English text, we depend on The Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 1:247.

25. Strawn, "Psalm 22:17b," p. 448.

26. Ibid.

27. For the sources of the Herakles legends, see Timothy Gantz, Early Greek Myth: A Guide to the Literary and Artistic Sources (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 1:374-466.

28. Jack H. Schuster, "Change of (Academic) Life: A Note,"RSN 21, no 3 (May 2006): 16.

29. Thomas B. Hoffer et al., Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities: Summary Report 2004 (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, 2005), p. 140, appendix, table B 1.

30. The years 1994-96 equal 1994, 1995, and 1996, as reported in RSN 19, no. 1 (January 2004): 28. For the years 2003 and 2004, see RSN 21, no. 2 (March 2006): 8, counting "positions registered" (140 for 2004 and 121 for 2003); 110 for 2002, counting "positions available," in RSN 18, no. 2 (March 2003): 9. Job openings are not described in the same manner in all issues of this periodical. Some issues of the periodical designate job openings as "positions registered" while other issues designate them as "positions available."

31. RSN 21, no. 2 (March 2006): 8. Some might think it a good sign that the total number of openings did increase to 178 in 2006, but the number of candidates also increased. Thus, in 2005 there were 3.47 candidates for each position, but in 2006 there were 4.27 candidates for each position. In short, in 2006 there was an even higher ratio of candidates to job openings. These figures are derived from RSN 22, no. 2 (March 2007): 6-7.

32. RSN 21, no. 3 (May 2006): 21.

33. Jack H. Schuster and Martin J. Finkelstein, The American Faculty: The Restructuring ofAcademic World and Careers (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), p. 460, appendix I. The estimate is dated to 1984, and so caution must be maintained. A more recent report estimates that 36.4 percent of professors at "elite doctoral institutions" fell into the "atheist/agnostic" category. For a summary of this report, see Dorothy D. Resig, "How Religious Are America's Professors?" BAR 33, no. 2 (March/April 2007): 55.

34. Schuster, "Change of (Academic) Life," p. 16

35. RSN 21, no. 3 (May 2006): 21.

36. RSN 21, no. 2 (March 2006): 8.

37. RSN 19, no. 1 (January 2004): 28.

38. For 2003-05 (i.e., 2003, 2004, and 2005), see RSN 21, no. 2 (March 2006): 8; for 1996-98 (i.e., 1996, 1997, and 1998), see RSN 19, no. 1 (January

2004): 28.

39. Openings is published by the American Academy of Religion. The statistics were compiled from its Web site, although the link for Openings is available only to members of the AAR, http://www.aarweb.org/openings/current.asp (accessed September 17, 2006).

40. Hector Avalos, "The Ideology of the SBL and the Demise of an Academic Profession," SBL Forum (May 2006), see http://www.sbl-site.org/Article.aspx? Articleld =520.

41. See http://www.sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?Articleld=530 (accessed September 16, 2006).

42. Daniel J. Estes, "Audience Analysis and Validity in Application," Bibliotheca Sacra 150 (April-June 1993): 227.

Chapter 9

THE MEDIA-PUBLISHING COMPLEX

an Brown's The Da Vinci Code is a juggernaut of a publication.' Some forty million copies have been sold, and the movie released on May 19, 2006, scored one of the largest box office takes in history. Many Christians felt threatened because The Da Vinci Code challenged many common Christian beliefs.2 For traditional Christians, Jesus is God, and for Dan Brown, Jesus is a man. For traditional Christians, Jesus remained chaste, and for Dan Brown, Jesus not only had sex but also has descendants that are still alive. The thought of the divine as feminine is still anathema for many Christians, but The Da Vinci Code celebrates the divine feminine.

However, it would be a mistake to say that The Da Vinci Code is antireligious. Rather, the book is controversial for some Christians because it has another and competing version of their religion. As such, The Da Vinci Code only reignited an intra-Christian conflict rather than a conflict between Christianity and atheism. But, equally important, The Da Vinci Code book and film illustrates how a media-publishing complex exerts enormous global influence in transmitting religious ideas.

In fact, the media-publishing complex, rather than the classroom, forms a primary vehicle for information about the Bible. By "media" I refer here to reproducible audiovisual forms of communication. Historically, the primary one has been printing, in the form of books and articles. Also important is film, which has been used as a medium for the promotion of religious ideas since its inception.' Finally, there is the Internet, the vast potential of which is still unfolding before us. The new electronic warfare consists of blogs where scholars can argue with each other instantaneously and ad infinitum before a global audience. Here we provide a brief discussion of how these media help maintain the value of the Bible and biblical studies in the modern world.

PRINT MEDIA

Johann Gutenberg (1400?-1468), a German printer, is credited with igniting the

printing revolution, and religion was the primary beneficiary from the start. By the end of the fifteenth century some six million books had been printed, and half of the thirty thousand titles were on religious subjects.4 Protestantism, in fact, might not have arisen without the aid of the printing press, according to renowned scholar of printing Elizabeth Eisenstein.5 Between 1517 and 1520 Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation, wrote some thirty tracts that were distributed in some three hundred thousand printed copies. This helped spread the revolution against Catholicism much more effectively.

Today, academia cannot exist without books. The SBL itself phrases it this way: `Books are central to the life and success of the Society.... Annual meeting sessions have stimulated diverse publications not only within the Society publications but across the entire publishing industry."6 But unlike publishers in other fields in the humanities, book publishers in biblical studies are still tied to religion rather than to secular academia. Abingdon Press is still identifiably Methodist. Hendrickson Press is owned by an evangelical Christian, and Eerdmans is operated by a family with Dutch Reformed roots. The merged Westminster John Knox Press is the publisher for the Presbyterian Church (USA).

At the annual meetings of the AAR and SBL, dozens of publishers ply their latest books. One would think that after two thousand or more years, everything has been written about the Bible. In some ways, that is true. We argue here that for most biblical scholars the name of the game is not to write something new, but rather to convince the marketplace that they have written something new.

Walter E. Aufrecht, the respected biblical archaeologist, noted this very problem when he reviewed The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East (OEANE) published in 1997.7 Aufrecht compared the articles found in that reference work to an earlier work, the authoritative Anchor Bible Dictionary (ABD), published in 1992.8 In particular, Aufrecht observed that " [t]here are 63 subjects for which the OEANE and ABD have articles written by the same author. Eighteen of these articles are virtually the same as their ABD counterpart, containing only minor changes in content and format."9

In all honesty, I myself have contributed to this problem. My articles on "healthcare" or "medicine" are present, in various versions, in The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East (1997), Eerdmans Dictionary of

the Bible (2000), and in a forthcoming New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible by Abingdon Press.10 From a publisher's perspective, there are not that many scholars who specialize in healthcare. From an author's perspective it is important to establish a reputation by having a presence in the best biblical reference books published. It is a self-feeding cycle at times.

It is common knowledge that academics must publish to advance in their careers. The motto of "publish or perish" applies particularly to research universities, where prestige is measured by the number of one's publications. Frederick Crews, an incisive observer of the academy, remarked, "With tenure for wafer and the assistant professorship for circumcision, nothing further is needed to account for the submissive and ritualistic aspect of most published work.""

But the nature of scholarly publishing has also changed. As Willis G. Regier, the director of the University of Illinois Press, has observed in his analysis of university presses, "Twenty years ago, the primary concerns of a scholar were the clear and accurate presentation of scholarship in an attractive and durable format; now marketing, paperback publication, and sales in superstores are front and center."12 Indeed, the market is saturated with many books on all types of subjects that compete with biblical studies.

The SBL has sought to help biblical scholars market their books better. In 1996, Publishers Weekly initiated a series of sessions on publishing at the AAR/SBL Annual Meeting. The objective of those sessions was "to provide a forum to discuss issues related to publishing commercially viable books by respected religion and biblical scholars.... This year's General Session will focus on agenting.'"3 Since that time, the number of books under discussion in sessions has, indeed, increased. A simple survey of "Books Under Discussion" panels in selected years shows the following:14

1982: 1
1996: 21
1997: 20
2004: 13
2005: 24
2006: 41

There is nothing inherently wrong with discussing more books. However, given the stated goals of focusing on more "agenting," it is reasonable to ask how many of those books are chosen because of "agenting" and how many are chosen for their merit.

The fact is that it is still a rare occurrence for a biblical scholar to score a book on the New York Times bestseller list. Such books have included Bart Ehrman's Misquoting Jesus (2005), which is a more popular presentation of material he had published previously.15 In this case, the book is welcome because it actually does help to undermine confidence in the Bible, and so helps the world move beyond using scripture to authorize actions injurious to society.

Recently, another trend is to hitch onto a bandwagon that is more popular. The Da Vinci Code, for example, has spawned a small industry of biblical scholars who comment on its merits or historical inaccuracies.16 Such critiques can be good for educating the public. Unfortunately, the disdain shown for The Da Vinci Code's unhistorical portrait of Jesus is frequently not conjoined with an equal disdain for the lack of historicity of the biblical portrait of Jesus. In any case, the point here is not so much that we should reject opportunities provided by juggernauts. Rather, the point is that such opportunities also reflect the fact that books in biblical studies usually are not able to command such great interest without help from Hollywood.

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY REVIEW

Magazines are part of the effort to maintain the importance of the Bible in modern society. And among Bible-related magazines, none is more loved and reviled than Biblical Archaeology Review, which is reportedly the archaeology magazine with the largest circulation in the world. The creation of Harvard-trained lawyer Hershel Shanks (1930-), BAR has served biblical education well in some cases and badly in others. I use many of its articles in my classes because they are written by some of the best-known biblical scholars in the world.

Shanks and his magazine share a personality: brash, bold, and controversial. BAR has been rightly credited with assisting in the liberation of the DSS. Among other things, in 1991 the Biblical Archaeology Society published a computer-assisted reconstruction of the scrolls that, in effect, allowed scholars

access to officially unpublished materials. This and other developments led the Israel Antiquities Authority, which oversees the official DSS team, to end in 1991 the monopoly it had on access."

And, indeed, BAR thrives on conflict. BAR has made the most of the public feuding between Dever and Davies, among other scholars, and BAR is where some of the actual fiery exchanges take place. There are numerous stories about the gossip at the SBL Annual Meeting that are more akin to the style of the National Enquirer than to the typical scholarly publication. Consider the headlines of articles from the January/February 2003 issue: (1) "Israeli Scholar Bares His Fangs-Again," which is about Elisha Qimron, a scholar with whom Shanks has had legal battles; (2) "Will Marty Abegg Ever Find a Job?" which is about a scholar who published unauthorized copies of the DSS and was ostracized as a result.18

The competitive nature of BAR can be seen in the recent editorial by Shanks against National Geographic's promotion of the newly recognized Gospel of Judas. National Geographic had a virtual monopoly on that discovery, and it used its magazine cover, a television special, an exhibit in its Explorers Hall in Washington, DC, and its Web site to bring attention to the Gospel of Judas. Shanks remarks: "The way the National Geographic has played up this story makes it guilty of unjustified sensationalism. I realize some may consider this a case of the pot calling the kettle black. If that be treason, however, make the most of it."19

Of course, BAR is well-known for being embroiled in the scandal of the James Ossuary. It was BAR that first announced the existence of this ossuary, which has the name "Jesus" inscribed in it. The attention-grabbing headline on the cover of the November/December 2002 issue of BAR was "World Exclusive! Evidence of Jesus Written in Stone/Evidence of `James the Brother of Jesus' Found in Jerusalem." Now that the Israel Antiquities Authority has declared the ossuary to be a forgery, Shanks has been one of the vocal supporters of Oded Golan, the alleged forger, now on trial in Israel.

For this and other reasons, many prominent scholars have at one time or another refused to write articles for that publication, or even to cite articles in BAR.20 Shuka Dorfman, the director of the Israel Antiquities Authority, which governs all archaeological work in Israel, has gone so far as to prohibit Israel

Antiquities archaeologists from providing interviews to Shank's magazines.21

Among the most vocal critics of BAR is Eric Meyers, a prominent archaeologist from Duke University, who has accused BAR of encouraging the plunder of archaeological sites because it provides advertisements for antiquities dealers, who mostly traffic in unprovenanced artifacts (those whose archaeological context has not been verified by professional or authorized channels).22 Featuring objects in BAR may increase the market value of precious objects. In detailing the role of Shanks in organizing the exhibition of the ossuary at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto in 2002, Meyers also stated that "Shanks took a large fee for this; it's reported to be a $25,000.00 fee just as agent for the exhibition."23 In short, Meyers suggests a conflict of interest in Shanks's defense of the ossuary.

In general, BAR is a vocal advocate for the value of the study of the Bible, and it celebrates every artifact that is even remotely associated with the Bible. Although he is Jewish, Shanks is also an advocate for the archaeology of the New Testament.24 Shanks himself may not believe that everything in the Bible is historical but he certainly still upholds many cherished beliefs, including belief in archaeological support for "the validity of the Book of Judges."25

Although not afraid to publish articles offensive to many fundamentalists, Shanks also knows that Christians are the main consumers of his magazine. Accordingly, a regular columnist for Bible Review (and now for Biblical Archaeology Review) is Ben Witherington, a Christian apologist and professor at Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky. Witherington is the general editor of the "New Cambridge Commentary Series" and a frequent guest on programs for the History Channel and Discovery Channel. Among other things, Witherington sees himself as a champion for a new kind of "biblical orthodoxy."26 His orthodoxy shows up frequently in Shanks's publications, as illustrated by the essay sugarcoating Paul's attitude toward slavery.27

The religionism and ideology of Shanks is also evident in how the magazine judges scholars by the degree to which they support Judaism, Israel, or Zionism. For example, in a sidebox describing the major players in DSS studies, it describes Frank Moore Cross as "[o]ne of the world's leading scholars and probably the most influential.... A great friend of Israel and of the Jewish people."28 On the other hand, John Strugnell is described as "[a]n anti-Semite.

Rabidly anti-Israel."29 Despite the context of a legitimate discussion on anti-Judaism among DSS scholars, such characterizations also display the degree to which being for or against Israel (not just against Judaism) is important for Shanks.

Yet Shanks's organization is showing signs that there is less interest in biblical studies magazines than in previous years. In 2005 Shanks announced the end of two of his unsuccessful magazines, Bible Review and Archaeology Odyssey.30 The former was meant for readers less interested in biblical archaeology, and the latter was meant for readers interested in archaeology beyond the confines of the biblical world. Shanks credited the Internet and falling advertising revenue as reasons for ending publication. However, he also has issued this more somber assessment:

> The gap between archaeology and the Bible is widening, however, not narrowing. This is dangerous not only for people interested in the Bible but also for the archaeologists, many of whom to be blunt again, could not be less interested in the Bible. For in the end, public support for archaeology does matter.31

The consolidation of Shanks's magazines signals again that all is not so well in biblical studies, even if Archaeology, another popular magazine, envisions a bright future for archaeology outside of Israel or the Bible.32

THE FILM INDUSTRY

Michael Medved, author of Hollywood vs. America (1992), is notorious for criticizing what he perceives to be Hollywood's antireligious bias.33 He cites numerous cases where the Church has come under attack. Violence and sex seem more prevalent than in earlier times. He argues that during the Golden Age (late 1920s to early 1950s), Hollywood was very reverential toward biblical materials, while today Hollywood denigrates traditional religious and family values. He complains that "preaching against religion is, however, entirely accepted and used as a means of helping a film to achieve a veneer of seriousness and 'class.' 1114

While Medved is right about the increase in the number of films that rail against traditional religious values, he is off the mark in his overall argument. In

fact, recent movies are not so much antireligious as simply shifting to new forms of religious expression. Thus, Harry Potter books and movies may offend traditional Christians who do not endorse the "pagan witchcraft" they seem to glorify, but this does not mean that Harry Potter movies and books are against all religion. The same applies to Disney productions, which have received wide criticism from evangelical Christians.35 Medved confuses heterodoxy with antireligionism. Moreover, Medved ignores that the Bible itself is filled with some of the most violent, sexually sadistic, and misogynistic ordure ever penned. If shown on film, the Bible would not have the Grating he craves for movies.

In fact, we find many films that openly do espouse religionism.36 The Left Behind series of movies, featuring former child star Kirk Cameron, while not successful in the general public, still have a sizable following in churches. However, other movies loved by many conservative Christians, such as director Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings trilogy (2001-2003), have been highly successful. The remarkable conjoining of Protestant evangelicals with Mel Gibson, a Pre-Vatican II Catholic, signals a reconfiguration, not a diminution, of religionism in Hollywood."

Academic biblical scholars play a role here, too. For example, the Aramaic dialogue in Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ (2004) owes much to the work of William Fulco, a Near Eastern and biblical scholar at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. This dialogue helped create the illusion of "authenticity" and "historicity" for audiences. To be sure, there were some biblical scholars, such as John Dominic Crossan, who criticized Gibson pungently for misrepresenting the Bible.38 However, Crossan and other critics of Gibson will still not repudiate the biblical text altogether even though in many places it is just as, if not more, violent than Gibson's Passion.

In fact, we can easily find examples of Hollywood engaging in portrayals of the Bible in recent films that are even more positive than in earlier films. One case in point is Hollywood depictions of the story of Moses's murder of the Egyptian taskmaster related in Exodus 2:11-12:

> One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

By any modern American legal standard, this qualifies as murder, as it was premeditated and was not an act of self-defense.

In Cecil B. DeMille's The Ten Commandments (1956), Moses intentionally kills the Egyptian, even if the episode takes place in the context of Moses saving Joshua's life.39 But in the more recent Prince of Egypt (1998), an animated version meant for children, Moses kills the Egyptian by accident and in full view of many people. There is nothing here about Moses killing the taskmaster with premeditation, and with no one looking, as the biblical text indicates. Compared to DeMille's Ten Commandments, The Prince of Egypt is even more bent on whitewashing biblical violence and guarding Moses's heroic status.40 For the most part, movies made about the Bible continue to be fairly positive and religionist.

TELEVISION

Even into the early 1980s there were only three major American networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC. They were all independently owned. As detailed by Ken Auletta in his Three Blind Mice: How the TV Networks Lost Their Way (1991), all that changed in the 1980s with the proliferation of cable and the purchase of the networks by large corporations.41 General Electric purchased NBC, Capital Cities Communications purchased ABC, and the Loews Corporation purchased CBS. Later mergers combined major print and audiovisual media and even Internet media, as in the case of the TimeWarner/AOL merger and the merger of NBC and Microsoft to create MSNBC.

These mergers created "synergistic" effects of unprecedented proportions, wherein different media venues reinforced each other to provide the illusion that something is important because it is on multiple media venues. Thus, on August 13, 2006, The Today Show on NBC showed a seemingly "newsworthy" interview with Simcha Jacobovici about his upcoming documentary, called The Exodus Decoded, which was to receive its first broadcast on August 20, 2006, on the History Channel. But viewers were not told that General Electric, parent company of NBC, also owns part of the History Channel.

Such "news interviews" give credence to the most fallacious and flimsy of theories in support of the Bible. For example, The Exodus Decoded (2006), produced by Simcha Jacobovici, purports to find evidence that the biblical

Exodus really happened around 1500 BCE, an idea most biblical scholars no longer support. Similarly, in 2003 the Discovery Channel aired James: Brother of Jesus, another show produced by Jacobovici (in conjunction with Hershel Shanks), that supported the authenticity of the James Ossuary.

In any case, it is not difficult to find the religionism even amid the secularism because American television and religion have always had a paradoxical and ambivalent relationship.42 Of course, there are whole religious networks, such as Trinity Broadcasting Network, which have global coverage and are savvy about using the Internet. Yet these networks mainly cater to the converted in America; they are not so effective in reaching the coveted audiences who are "in the middle."

More relevant is the religionism that does reach more mainstream audiences. Consider such faith-affirming programs as Highway to Heaven (NBC, 1984-1989), Touched by an Angel (CBS, 1994-2003), and Joan of Arcadia (CBS, 2003-). Scholars of religion have argued that the long-running The Simpsons (Fox, 1990-) is a very proreligious show.43 Even Star Trek (1967-70), which some may see as a paragon of scientism, also has been interpreted to promote "a consonance" between the religious and scientific quests.44 Today, similar observations may be made about the popular anime productions, mostly originating in Japan, such as Neon Genesis Evangelion (1995-), which is permeated by Jewish Kabbalah symbolism, and is disseminated through the Internet, DVDs, and movies.

Proreligionists messages may be found in the ubiquitous children's holiday specials made by the team of Arthur Rankin Jr. and Jules Bass, famous for their Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (1964), The Little Drummer Boy (1968), and Santa Claus Is Coming to Town (1970).45 The Rankin/Bass productions advocate faith but not in any overt denominational ways. One case in point is 'Twas the Night Before Christmas (1974), in which a little mouse named Albert is portrayed as a thorough rationalist and skeptic with regard to the existence of Santa Claus. Eventually, Albert's father convinces Albert to stop relying only on his physical senses and learn to understand with the heart. So Albert believes in Santa Claus again. Though overt denominational views may have declined in mainstream television, the affirmation of the value of faith and religion is still there.

SUMMARY

A media-publishing complex is an important part of educating or miseducating the public about the Bible. Although Michael Medved is right to point to the increased secularization of the entertainment industry, he also misses much of the proreligionist messaging still present because he confuses nontraditional religionism with antireligionism. Yet one cannot understand an animated film such as The Prince of Egypt except as part of a continuing effort to portray the Bible and its characters in the best light possible. One cannot understand the phenomenon of The Passion of the Christ except as an overt effort to promote certain visions of Christian theology.

At the same time, we see that academic biblical scholars still have a role in producing movies and television programs that attempt to maintain the value of, and interest in, the Bible. What we do not see is academic biblical scholars participating in movies and television programs that aim to move the world beyond dependence on the Bible or on religion. In that sense, the more popular part of the media-publishing complex is still engaged in fostering the illusion that religion and the Bible are valuable for the modern world.

NOTES

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2. For an evangelical Christian assessment of the Da Vinci Code, see Gary M. Burge, "Jesus out of Focus: The Da Vinci Code Is Raising Issues That Go to the Heart of the Christian Faith-And It's Starting to Confuse Us All," Christianity Today (June 2006): 24-29.

3. For treatments of religion in film, see Richard C. Stern, Clayton Jefford, and Guerric Debona, Savior on the Silver Screen (New York: Paulist, 1999); W. Barnes Tatum, Jesus at the Movies: A Guide to the First Hundred Years (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1997); Bernard Brandon Scott, Hollywood Dreams & Biblical Stories (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

4. Steven Ozment, The Age of Reform, 1250-1550 (New Haven: Yale University Press 1980), p. 199.

5. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe, 2 vols. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Eisenstein, The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), especially p. 145, where Eisenstein discusses most succinctly her definition of the Renaissance in the context of the printing revolution.

6. American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature 1997 Annual Meeting Program Book (Atlanta: American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature, 1997), p. 19.

7. Walter E. Aufrecht, "The State of Near Eastern Archaeology," BASOR 314 (1999): 71-75; Eric M. Meyers, ed., The Oxford Encyclopedia ofArchaeology in the Near East, 5 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

8. David Noel Freedman, ed., The Anchor Bible Dictionary, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

9. Aufrecht, "The State of Near Eastern Archaeology," p. 74.

10. Freedman, ed., Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000). The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, the general editor of which is Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, will be published by Abingdon Press.

11. Frederick Crews, "Do Literary Studies Have an Ideology," PMLA 85, no. 3 (1970): 427.

12. Willis G. Regier, "5 Problems and 9 Solutions for University Presses," Chronicle of Higher Education 49, no. 40 (June 13, 2003), p. B7, available at http://chronicle.com/free/v49/i40/40b0070l.htm (accessed August 16, 2006).

13. American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature 1999 Annual Meeting Program Book, p. 18.

14. These numbers have been compiled from the program books of the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature. The book in 1982 was also not typical insofar as it was a book about

the history of the SBL (Saunders, Searching the Scriptures).

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18. See BAR 29, no. 1 (January/February 2003): 34, 36.

19. Hershel Shanks, "Sensationalizing Gnostic Christianity," BAR 32, no. 4 (July/August 2006): 66.

20. Shanks, "Cites Unseen: Why Do Some Scholars Avoid References to BAR?" BAR 31, no. 6 (November/December 2005): 6.

21. [Shanks], "Shuka Bars BAR," BAR 29, no. 5 (September/October 2003): 32.

22. Shanks, "Duke Professor Calls for Public Pressure Against BAR: But Eric Meyers Won't Take on His Colleagues," BAR 31, no. 2 (March/April 2005): 6.

23. Eric Meyers, "Unprovenanced, Unauthenticated: Ethics and the Antiquities Market," lecture delivered May 5, 2004, Center for the Study of Antiquity, Cornerstone University, Grand Rapids, MI. The lecture appears on the Biblical Archaeology Society Web site, http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/bswbOOossuary_Meyers.pdf (accessed August 15, 2006).

24. See his remarks on the importance of New Testament archaeology in Shanks, "Roundup of Annual Meetings," BAR 31, no. 2 (March/April 2005): 44.

25. Shanks, "The Gap between Archaeology and the Bible: Scholars Now Attack Much of the Bible as Unhistorical," BAR 31, no. 4 (July/August 2005): 62. See also Shanks, ed., Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1999).

26. See Ben E. Witherington III, The Problem with Evangelical Theology: Testing Exegetical Foundations of Calvinism, Dispensationalism, and Wesleyanism (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), especially pp. 251-54.

27. Witherington, "Was Paul a Pro-slavery Chauvinist? Making Sense of Paul's Seemingly Mixed Moral Messages," BR 20, no. 2 (April 2004): 8, 44.

28. Shanks, "Major Players," BAR (March/April 1991): 53.

29. Ibid.

30. Shanks, "A Time to Consolidate: BR to Become Part of BAR-Suspends Separate Publication," BR 21, no. 5 (Winter 2005): 2.

31. Shanks, "The Gap between Archaeology and the Bible, p. 62.

32. See Brian Fagan, "The Next Fifty Years: Will It Be the Golden Age of Archaeology?" Archaeology 58, no. 5 (September/October 2006): 18-23.

33. Michael Medved, Hollywood vs. America: Popular Culture and the War on Traditional Values (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

34. Ibid., p. 68.

35. See Perucci Ferraiuolo, Disney and the Bible: A Scriptural Critique of the Magic Kingdom (Camp Hill, PA: Horizon, 1996); Mark I. Pinsky, The Gospel According to Disney: Faith, Trust, and Pixie Dust (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004).

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38. See John Dominic Crossan, "Hymn to a Savage God," in Jesus and Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ: The Film, The Gospels, and the Claims of History, ed. Kathleen E. Corley and Robert L. Webb (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 8-27; Crossan, "Jewish Crowd and Roman Governor," in Mel Gibson's Bible, ed. Timothy K. Beal and Tod Linafelt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 59-67; J. Shaw Landres and Michael Berenbaum, After the Passion Is Gone: American Religious Consequences (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2004).

39. See Gabe Essoe and Raymond Lee, De Mille: The Man and His Pictures (New York: Castle, 1970).

40. For a more general study of the history of violence in film, see Stephen Prince, Screening Violence (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

41. Ken Auletta, Three Blind Mice: How the TV Networks Lost Their Way (New York: Random House, 1991).

42. See Quentin Schultze, Televangelism and American Culture (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991).

43. See Mark I. Pinsky, The Gospel According to the Simpsons: The Spiritual Life of the World's Most Animated Family (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

44. See Ross S. Kraemer, William S. Cassidy, and Susan Schwartz, Religions of Star Trek (Boulder: Westview, 2001).

45. See Rick Goldschmidt, The Enchanted World of Rankin/Bass: A Portfolio (Issaquah, WA: Tiger Mountain, 1997).

Chapter 10

CONCLUSION

iblical studies as we know it should end. Many scholars have told us that the Bible is a product of another age and culture, whose norms, practices, and conception of the world were very different from ours. Yet these very same scholars paradoxically keep the general public under the illusion that the Bible does matter or should matter. We have argued that whether they intend it or not, their validation of the Bible as a text for the modern world serves to validate their own employment and relevance in the modern world.

We have seen how translations, rather than exposing the alien and more opprobrious concepts of biblical authors, instead conceal them with genderneutral language and other devices. Some are more blatant in endorsing two versions: one for the ignorant masses and one for the scholarly hierocracy. Translations are a big business, and publishers seek to sell a product. To be successful they have to make the translations attractive to consumers.

We have seen how textual critics, even after knowing that the original text is probably irrecoverable, do not announce to most churches that their Bibles are at best constructs that cannot be traced earlier than the second century for the New Testament and the third century BCE for the Hebrew Bible. Indeed, Christians are still taught to believe that the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts behind their translations can be confidently restored to what God intended. Textual critics know that their audience will be greatly reduced if they shift their biblical study to the history of its constituent texts. Believers want the original, and nonbelievers don't care about textual histories.

In our look at biblical history and archaeology we learned that most socalled facts are nothing more than tendentious religionist and nationalistic interpretations, even among those who claim to be secularist positivists. For example, we have seen Dever attempting to retain the idea that archaeology can help us to "know" that the highland dwellers were "Israelite." Yet Dever's retreat from previous certitudes is a metaphor for the entire fields of biblical archaeology and history. "Biblical history" has not so much been erased as it has been exposed as not being there in the first place.

Modern historical-Jesus research is merely a postscript to the obituary written by Reimarus. In fact, the decline in Jesus research is so precipitous that many Jesus scholars have gone from arguing about the historicity of big central issues, such as the resurrection, to the most trivial questions, such as which of two sequences best represents Jesus' utterance of two words ("is better" or "better is"?). We have also learned that the socalled new defeat of naturalism only hides a selective supernaturalism. This is most evident when William Lane Craig cannot bring himself to believe in the resurrection of the saints reported in Matthew 27:52-53, yet he tells us we should believe the resurrection story about Jesus in the same book.

The supposed superior artistic merit of the Bible has been unmasked for what it is-another bibliolatrous apologetic device. Not only is beauty subjective, the Bible does not even satisfy the very criteria (such as symmetry or originality) that scholars often tell us are the measure of artistry. At the same time, many cannot even conceive that parts of the Bible may be ugly, artistically and ethically. That also would be bad for business.

We have learned that there is a very active infrastructure supporting biblical studies that is just as religionist as it ever was. True, it may no longer be "fundamentalist" or "traditionalist," but it is still religionist insofar as it believes that religion is essentially good and necessary for a productive human life. We see this attitude in the entertainment industry and in the publishing industry. We still see it in the most elite institutions of private and public academia, despite the growth in secularism and pluralism. As Jon Levenson of Harvard Divinity School says, we have replaced one form of orthodoxy with another.

Yes, bibliolatry is still what binds most biblical scholars together, whether they see themselves as religious or secular, champions of Western culture or multiculturalists, evangelical Christians or Marxist hermeneuticians. Witness the plea of William G. Dever:

> If its professional custodians no longer take the Bible seriously, at least as the foundation of our Western cultural tradition, much less a basis for private and public morality, where does that leave us? If we simply jettison the Bible as so much excess baggage in the brave new postmodern world, what shall we put in its place?'

But why do we need to put anything in the Bible's place? Why do we need an ancient book that endorses everything from genocide to slavery to be a prime authority of our public or private morality? Why do we need any ancient text at all, regardless of what morality it espouses? "The Bible" is mostly a construct of the last two thousand years of human history. Modern human beings have existed for tens of thousands of years without the Bible, and they don't seem to have been the worse for it. There are modern secularized societies in Europe that seem to get along just fine without the Bible.

From my perspective, there are really only three alternatives for what is now called biblical studies.

1. Eliminate biblical studies completely from the modern world

2. Retain biblical studies as is, but admit that it is a religionist enterprise

3. Retain biblical studies, but redefine its purpose so that it is tasked with eliminating completely the influence of the Bible in the modem world

I do not advocate the first option, at least for the moment, because I do believe that the Bible should be studied, if only as a lesson in why human beings should not privilege such books again. My objection has been to the religionist and bibliolatrous purpose for which it is studied. The second option is actually what is found in most seminaries, but we must advertise that scholars in all of academia are doing the same thing, though they are not being very open and honest about it.

I prefer the third option. The sole purpose of biblical studies, under this option, would be to help people move toward a postscriptural society. It may be paternalistic to "help people," but no more so than when translators hide the truth or when scholars don't aggressively disclose the truth for fear of upsetting believers. All of education is to some extent paternalistic, since an elite professoriate is there to provide information that uneducated people lack. The third option is also the most logical position, given the discovery of the Bible's alien character.

Mine would also be the less self-interested option because it would not have my own employment as an ultimate goal, and it would allow thousands of other

texts that have not yet been given a voice to also speak about the possible wisdom, beauty, and lessons they might contain. Indeed, thousands of Mesopotamian texts continue to lie untranslated. So even those who believe that literature does matter should be advocating that we bring to light more of the as-yet unread ancient texts.

But is elimination of the Bible's authority feasible in the modern world? I believe it is feasible for at least two reasons:

(1) I have already argued that even believers use very little of "the Bible"

(2) Believers who do use the Bible do so under the illusion that they have the Bible, the unmediated word of God

To move believers from their minimal use of the Bible to no use at all is not a big quantitative step, but it is a formidable qualitative step. The reason is that it is scholars, translators, priests, and ministers themselves who must be convinced to join an educational mission centered on exposing the alien nature of the Bible. They must find the will to proclaim to their congregations that they do not have "the Bible," but really only a document constructed for them by elite scholars.

Some might object that I am contradicting myself in expending so much effort arguing against the study of a Bible that is so little used. My response is twofold. First, the small amount of the Bible still being used remains a significant problem, especially in justifying violence and oppression. Thus, total abolition of biblical authority becomes a moral obligation and a key to this world's survival. Second, by maintaining the idea that the Bible is any sort of divine or moral authority there always remains the potential to use it more than it is being used now. Unfortunately, the pen often has proved mightier than the truth.

So our purpose is to excise from modern life what little of the Bible is being used and also to eliminate the potential use of any sacred scripture as an authority in the modern world. Sacred texts are the problem that most scholars are not willing to confront. What I seek is liberation from the very idea that any sacred text should be an authority for modern human existence. Abolishing human reliance on sacred texts is imperative when those sacred texts imperil the existence of human civilization as it is currently configured. The letter can kill.

That is why the only mission of biblical studies should be to end biblical studies as we know it.

NOTE

1. William G. Dever, What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 3. See also Robert A. Kraft, "Paramania: Besides, Before and Beyond Biblical Studies," JBL 126 (2007): 5-27.

APPENDIX
BIBLE VERSIONS: A BRIEF GUIDE

iven the large number of versions and abbreviations used in this book, this note provides a brief description of each version. Dates in parentheses refer to the first publication of the complete version, as sometimes the New Testament or Old Testament was published separately and earlier.

CEV (Contemporary English Version, 1995). Published by the American Bible Society, it is meant for today's young generation, including grade schoolers.

GNB (Good News Bible, 1976). It is an example of the so-called dynamicequivalence method, which seeks to adjust biblical translation to the culture of the reader. Notorious for sugarcoating objectionable passages, this version takes out the word "hate" in Luke 14:26.

KJV (King James Version, 1611). Also known as the AV (Authorized Version), the KJV has been a favorite traditional version among Protestants in America, and it is still regarded as the only authorized English translation among smaller groups of Protestant evangelicals (e.g., doctrinal statement of the Emmanuel Baptist Theological Seminary, http://www.emmanuelnewington.org/seminary /doctrine.htm).

NAB (New American Bible, 1970). This is the first American Catholic Bible translated completely from the original languages instead of from the Latin Vulgate.

NIV (New International Version, 1978). Perhaps the best selling Bible on the market, the NIV is particulalry popular among American Protestant evangelicals.

NJB (New Jerusalem Bible, 1985). A British Catholic update of the Jerusalem Bible (1966), the NJB includes mild efforts to be more gender inclusive.

NRSV (New Revised Standard Version, 1989). The NRSV is an interdenominational (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish) and gender-inclusive update of the RSV.

REB (Revised English Bible, 1989). The REB is a British interdenominational counterpart of the American RSV.

RSV (Revised Standard Version, 1952). An American revision of the King James Version, it was translated mostly by mainline Protestants (and one Jewish translator). It was burned and reviled by some fundamentalist Christians because, among other things, it replaced "virgin" with "young woman" in Isaiah 7:14.

TNIV (Today's New International Version, 2005). A "gender-inclusive" update of the NIV, it is currently under attack by many evangelical Christians.

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